SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY
3 7565 00911 220 1

BALZAC, HONORE DE, 1799-18
THE DEPUTY FROM ARCIS /

1899. V. 2
37565009112201 CENT

CLOSED STACKS c.1
Balzac
The deputy from Arcis
V.2
CENTRAL

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/deputyfromarcis0005geor

Honoré de Balzac

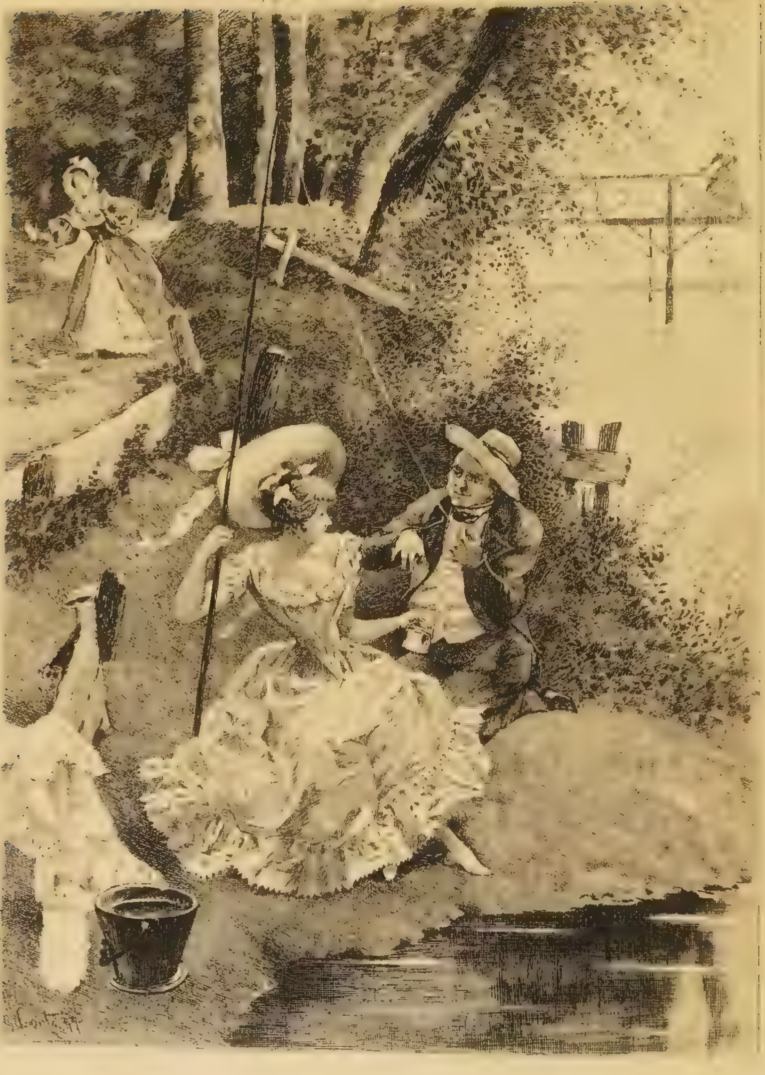
LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

MILITARY AND POLITICAL LIFE

VOLUME V

Copyright 1898 by G. Barrie & Son



ON THE BANK OF THE AUBE

It seemed to him, I doubt not, that the poor child, having more good will than science, did not go about as she ought.

* * * * * * * * *

Certain it is that Mademoiselle Beauvisage, happening to cross the bridge with her mother, cried out like a genuine enfant terrible :

"*Look, there's papa talking with the Parisian lady!*"

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie*
Humaine by HONORÉ DE BALZAC,
now for the first time com-
pletely translated
into English.

SANTA ROSA - SONOMA CO. LIBRARY

THE DEPUTY FROM ARCIS. IN TWO VOLUMES.
TRANSLATED BY GEORGE BURNHAM
IVES, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH
EIGHT ETCHINGS. VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED FOR SUBSCRIBERS
ONLY BY GEORGE BARRIE & SON.

COPYRIGHT, 1899, BY GEORGE BARRIE & SON

THE DEPUTY FROM ARCIS

PART SECOND

INSTRUCTIVE LETTERS

(*Continued*)

INSTRUCTIVE LETTERS

(*Continued*)

*

MARIE-GASTON TO MADAME LA COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Arcis-sur-Aube, May 9, 1839.

MADAME,

The electoral fever has infected you also, and you are kind enough to undertake to communicate to us, on behalf of Monsieur de l'Estorade, certain *discouragements* which most certainly deserve to be taken into consideration. I am free to say, however, that those suggestions do not seem to me to go so far as one might think, and, even before your official notification, the difficulties of our situation had been fully disclosed to us. We knew of the momentous confidential mission entrusted to Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, a mission which he tried with ill-success to conceal for some days under the disguise of a person connected with manufacturing. We knew also—and you, madame, seem to be ignorant of it—that this adroit agent of the ministerial plan has found a way to combine the interests of general politics with those of his private politics. Monsieur Maxime de

Trailles, if we are correctly informed, has recently been on the point of succumbing to a last and most alarming attack of the chronic disease with which he has long been afflicted. That disease is his debt—we do not speak of the *debts*, but the *debt* of Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, as we speak of the debt of England. In that extremity, my gentleman, being resolved to resort to the most desperate remedies, hit upon the expedient of a marriage, which might properly be called a marriage *in extremis*, as the aforesaid gentleman is approaching extremely near his fiftieth year, so I am told. Being very well known, which in his case means held in very low esteem in Paris, he did as tradesmen do with wares that are out of fashion, he shipped himself into the provinces and was unpacked at Arcis-sur-Aube just in time for the electoral fair, judging shrewdly that the always more or less tumultuous excitement of those political *Beaucaires* could but be favorable to the slightly shady character of his operations. His reckoning was accurate; the sudden death of young Charles Keller, the candidate upon whose election the government had at first determined, had cast the whole electorate of Arcis into a state of profound perturbation. Fishing in that troubled water, Monsieur Maxime de Trailles succeeded in hooking a candidate who is recommended by two very distinct varieties of merit and fitness.

From the standpoint of public affairs, Monsieur Beauvisage, whose name, madame, you remember very well, has the inestimable advantage of having assaulted with battering-rams and levelled with the ground the candidacy of a petty lawyer named Simon Giguet, who, to the great scandal of the government, would have had the audacity to take his seat in the Left Centre. That shutting-out of an impertinent upstart of the constitutional opposition seemed of such inestimable value, that it cast into the shade the notorious and well-defined unfitness of Sieur Beauvisage, as well as the thought of the ridicule with which his election could not fail to cover those who should lend their aid in securing it. From the standpoint of private affairs,—I mean Monsieur de Trailles's,—Monsieur Beauvisage has the merit of having an only daughter, passably pretty, who, without any exaggeration of her prospects, seems likely to bring to her husband a dowry of five hundred thousand francs, amassed in the manufacture of those cotton caps of which my last letter ventured to speak with so little respect. Now, the mechanism of the affair explains itself: to arouse and inflame in the father, who never would have thought of it himself, the ambition and hope of being sent to the Chamber; to hint that he should give you his daughter and her dowry as the reward of his labors and *disbursements,*—all that goes of itself; to dazzle the daughter by a remnant of painted youth, by supreme refinement of manners and by the title of countess; to begin very cleverly by appearing to hesitate between the daughter and the mother, and, lastly, to give a reassuring idea of his disinterestedness and the sincerity of his reformation by requesting that all the most effective guarantees that the law affords against himself be inserted in the contract: there you have the game, and the truly herculean task performed by Monsieur de Trailles in less than two weeks. But, at that juncture, we intervene. By virtue of the name which fell down to us one morning from the clouds, we are Champenois; we make ourselves Champenois even more thoroughly by becoming a landed proprietor in the province, and it happens that just at this time the province has determined to send to the Chamber at the approaching election no one but a child of its own vintage. "And for that very reason," you will say to me, "Beauvisage cannot fail to be given the preference; he is a more direct and less equivocal local product." It seems so to you, madame, but we are not quite such an idiot as Beauvisage; we do not invite people to laugh at us; we do not make cotton caps, it is true, but we make statues, statues for which we have been decorated with the Legion of Honor; religious statues, which are dedicated with great ceremony, in presence of Monseigneur the Bishop, who deigns to make a speech, and in presence of the constituted authorities; statues which the whole population of the town—I mean that part of it that was unable to obtain admission to the ceremony—flocks to admire at the establishment of mesdames the Ursulines, who are so proud of the magnificent ornament added to their little jewel of a chapel, that they keep their convent and their oratory open for an entire day to all comers, and all this does not fail to make us popular in some degree. And a fact that adds still more to our popularity is that we are not a stingy curmudgeon like Beauvisage; that we do not hoard up our income, sou by sou; that we employ at our château thirty workmen, painters, masons, glaziers, gardeners, trellis-makers; and, whereas the mayor of the town goes about on foot, we suddenly appear in Arcis with an elegant calèche and two high-stepping horses, which our father, who is not in Heaven, but in Paris, choosing to show himself in a more amiable light at a distance than at close quarters, has sent us by special messenger, for the purpose, I believe, of outdoing Monsieur de Trailles's tiger and tilbury, two articles which made a tremendous sensation before our arrival.

This evening, madame, to crown the ceremony of dedication of our *Sainte Ursule*, we give a banquet of fifty covers in our château, to which we have been sly enough to invite, together with the leading men of the province, all the public officials, removable and irremovable alike. Inasmuch as our candidacy has been announced, we feel sure in advance that the first-named class of invited guests will not accept our invitation. So much the better, on my word! there will be so much more room for the others, and the defaulters, whose names will be all known to-morrow, will stand self-convicted of servility and dependence, which fact will, we hope, deal a terrible blow at their influence on the population. Yesterday, madame, we drove in our calèche to the Château de Cinq-Cygne, where D'Arthez presented us first of all to the Princesse de Cadignan. That woman is really marvellously well preserved, and it seems as if she must be embalmed by the happiness of her liaison with the great writer.—See the *Secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan.*—"It is the sweetest happiness I have ever seen," you once said, madame, speaking of Monsieur and Madame de Portenduère; that remark I must repeat with reference to D'Arthez and the princess, modifying the epithet *sweet*, by the way, as that might seem a little young as applied to their Saint-Martin's summer. From what I have heard of a scene that took place long ago, at Madame d'Espard's, at the time that liaison began, I was quite sure that I should not find Monsieur Maxime de Trailles on very intimate terms at Cinq-Cygne; for, in the scene to which I refer, he put himself out to be insulting to D'Arthez, and D'Arthez, while contenting himself with making him appear ridiculous, considered him beneath contempt; now, that is a feeling that will never change in that noble and lofty mind. Upon his first appearance in the district, armed with a few letters of introduction, the agent of the ministerial policy began by receiving one or two courteous attentions at Cinq-Cygne; but they were mere floating planks, and D'Arthez soon sent them to the bottom. Our man, who flattered himself that he should find support for his intrigues at Cinq-Cygne, is so far out in his reckoning to-day, that it was from the mouth of the Duc de Maufrigneuse himself, to whom Monsieur de Trailles impertinently confided all his plans as a fellow-member of the

Jockey Club, that we received the information set forth in the beginning of this letter, to be communicated to Monsieur de l'Estorade, if you will kindly undertake that duty.

Madame de Maufrigneuse and the old Marquise de Cinq-Cygne were wonderfully affable to Dorlange—Sallenauve, I mean, but I find it hard to accustom myself to it; as they have not your humility, they were not like you, alarmed at such grandeur of soul as our friend may possess, and he, for his part, behaved with perfect propriety on that extremely embarrassing occasion. One cannot understand how it is that, after having lived so much alone, he has been able to make himself so entirely presentable at the first attempt. Can it be that the *beautiful*, which he has made his life-study hitherto, includes the pretty, the fashionable, the seemly, which are learned at second-hand, so to speak, and over and above the bargain? But that cannot be, for I have seen very eminent artists, especially sculptors, who were simply unendurable when they were once out of their studios.

I pause here, madame; my supply of facts is exhausted, and I feel that I am dropping into idle chatter; to-morrow I shall have to give you an account of our great banquet, which will be more interesting, perhaps, than my moral and philosophical observations.

May 10.

The dinner took place, madame; it was magnificently served and will be talked about in Arcis for a long time to come, I think. Sallenauve has in that organist—who, by the way, gave evidence yesterday, on the organ of the convent, at the dedication ceremony, of remarkable talent—a sort of steward and factotum, who leaves all the Vatels in the world a long way behind. He's not a man to run his sword through his body because the fresh fish is a little late. Lamps, colored glasses, garlands, and draperies to decorate the banquet hall ; even a pretty little assortment of fireworks, which we found packed away in the box of the calèche, through the thoughtfulness of that crabbed and invisible father, who has some good in him, nevertheless—nothing was lacking to make the fête a success : it was kept up until a late hour in the château gardens, to which the common herd was admitted to dance and drink its fill. Almost all those invited were present, except those whom we wished simply to embarrass. As the invitations were sent out on very short notice,—which the peculiar circumstances excused, by the way,—it was an amusing thing to see the notes of declination arrive, one after another, up to the time we sat down at the table, Sallenauve having ordered them to be brought to the salon as they arrived. At each note that he opened he was careful to say aloud : "This is monsieur le sous-préfet, or monsieur le procureur du roi, or the deputy-attorney, who regrets his inability to accept my invitation." All these *denials of assistance* were greeted with smiles and whispered comments by those present ; but when Beauvisage's letter appeared, and Dorlange announced that it was impossible for monsieur le maire to *correspond* to his courtesy, the hilarity became general and uproarious, on account of the substance as well as the form of the note, and it continued until suspended by the arrival of one Monsieur Martener, examining magistrate, who performed an act of signal gallantry in coming to the dinner. We must observe, however, that an examining magistrate is, by the nature of his office, divisible. As a magistrate, he is irremovable, and there is nothing about him subject to change except his title, the trifling additional salary allotted to him, and the privilege of issuing summonses and examining thieves, *superb rights*, which may be withdrawn from him by the chancellor's office by a stroke of the pen. Well, let us say, at all events, that Monsieur Martener is half-courageous; he was welcomed, however, like a *full moon*. Notwithstanding the presence of the Duc de Maufrigneuse, D'Arthez, and, above all, Monseigneur the Bishop, who is at the Château de Cinq-Cygne for a few days, there was one man whose absence caused a profound sensation, although his excuse, having been sent that morning, was not read in public; it was Grévin, the ex-notary. There was nothing to be said as to the Comte de Gondreville, who was also missing: the very recent death of his grandson, Charles Keller, did not permit him to attend the function, and, in sending him a conditional invitation, Sallenauve took pains to anticipate a refusal on his part; but Grévin, the right arm of the Comte de Gondreville, for whom he has certainly made many more compromising and more difficult sacrifices than merely dining out, Grévin, by remaining away, seemed to give notice that his patron still clung to the now almost deserted standard of Beauvisage; and that influence which seemed to be fighting shy, as they say in *sporting* parlance, was certainly of very great importance to us. Maître Achille Pigoult, Grévin's successor, tried to explain it by saying that the old man lived in strict retirement, and could hardly be induced to dine with his son-in-law two or three times a year. But that argument was speedily quashed by somebody's observing that Grévin accepted an invitation to be the sub-prefect's guest at a dinner-party given to bring the Beauvisage family and Monsieur Maxime de Trailles together. We shall have, therefore, some pulling in the direction of the Château de Gondreville, and I fancy that Mother Marie des Anges will have to make up her mind to use her secret thrust.

As the pretext for the dinner was the dedication of the *Sainte Ursule*, which could not be celebrated by a banquet at the establishment of the Ursuline nuns, Sallenauve had an excellent opportunity, at dessert, to propose a toast:

"To the mother of the poor! to the blessed and noble intellect, which, for fifty years, has shed its beams over all Champagne, and to which should be attributed the prodigious number of distinguished and accomplished women who adorn this beautiful province!"

If you knew as I do, madame, what sort of a place Champagne Pouilleuse is, you would say, as you read the sentiment which I reproduce in substance, that Sallenauve is a great villain, and that the passion to be chosen deputy may render a man capable of the most shocking enormities. Is it worth while, after all, for a man who ordinarily respects himself, to summon up courage for a lie of sufficient dimensions to be considered a crime, when a little thing of which he had not thought, which did not originate with him, and of which all the honor must be credited to the capricious aggregation of mutually sympathetic, mysterious elements, was soon to commend him to the sympathetic consideration of the electors more effectively than his infamous toast or than all the speeches in the world? You yourself told me, madame, that your son Armand discovered in Sallenauve a strong resemblance to the portraits of Danton; it seems that his judgment was accurate, for the same remark was made in my vicinity, not with reference to portraits but to the man himself, by several of the guests who had known and conversed with the great revolutionist. Laurent Goussard, as the leader of a party, was invited of course. Not only was he a friend of Danton, as I told you the other day; he seems also to have been his brother-in-law to some extent, as Danton, who was a good deal of a gallant, courted a sister of the honest miller for some years, and, as the ballad says, *had seen the miller's wife.* Well, the resemblance must be very striking, for, while we were taking our coffee after dinner, the good man's brain being a little heated by the fumes of the provincial vintage, which had been served unsparingly, as you can imagine, he approached Sallenauve and asked him bluntly if he might not be mistaken as to his father, and if he could assert positively that Danton had nothing to do with his creation.

Sallenauve took the thing good-naturedly, and simply made this calculation:

"Danton died April 5, 1793. In order to be his son, I must have been born in 1794 at the latest, so that I should be forty-five years old to-day. Now, the civil register of births in which I am inscribed as having been born of an unknown father and mother, and I hope my face as well, fix my birth in 1809 and give me just thirty years."

"You are right," replied Laurent Goussard, "the figures flatten out my idea; but never mind, we'll elect you all the same."

And I believe the man is right; this fancied resemblance will have an immense weight in the election. You must not imagine, madame, that Danton, notwithstanding the shocking souvenirs that surround his memory, is an object of horror and execration to the people of Arcis. In the first place, time has purified him; and there have remained a great character and a powerful intellect of which people are proud to be compatriots; at Arcis rarities and curiosities are few, and people talk of Danton there as they talk of Cannebière at Marseilles; a fortunate circumstance, therefore, the resemblance to that god whose worship is not confined to the limits of the town, but extends also to its suburbs and neighborhood! These electors *extra muros* are sometimes curiously ingenuous, and contradictions disturb them but little. Several agents, despatched into the neighboring districts, have already made the most of this far-off similarity of feature; and as the desideratum, in the rustic propaganda, is not so much to strike true as to strike hard, Laurent Goussard's version, apocryphal as it is, is hawked about through the rural communes with an assurance that finds no contradictor. While this alleged revolutionary origin is helping on our friend's affairs, they are being furthered in another direction, by saying to the gallant electors whom we seek to entice something that is much truer and impresses them no less:

"This gentleman," they are told again and again, "is the one who has bought the Château of Arcis."

And as the Château of Arcis, which towers above the town, is known throughout the district, it is a sort of landmark to these good people; but at the same time, being always ready to return to their memories of the past, which are much less dead and buried than you would suppose, they say: "Ah! he's the *seigneur* of the château!" giving a respectable and free translation of the idea presented to them.

And this, madame, with all respect, is the way the electoral kitchen is conducted and a deputy cooked.

MARIE-GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

Arcis-sur-Aube, May 11, 1839.

MADAME,

You do me the honor to tell me that my letters entertain you, and you urge me to have no fear of multiplying them. Is it not decidedly humiliating to me, and can it be that I can ever, in the whole course of my life, appear in the guise of an entertaining man, after the terrible misfortune which was the first lien between us? But, as I have told you, I am living in an atmosphere that intoxicates me. Something like a passionate desire for Sallenauve's success has taken possession of me, and perhaps also, in my capacity of morose and disappointed mortal, an even stronger and more passionate desire to hinder the triumph of unfitness and idiocy countenanced by low self-seeking and intrigue. I thank you, therefore, Monsieur de Trailles, for the exhibition you made of your burlesque father-in-law, for our benefit! You have succeeded in interesting me in something; at times I laugh more frequently than I lose my temper; but at those times I forget.

To-day, madame, the grotesque is more in evidence than ever, and behold us in full parade. Notwithstanding the discouraging suggestions of Monsieur de l'Estorade, we are constrained to believe that the ministry has received unfavorable news from its agent, and this is what seems to us to justify that belief. We are no longer staying at the Hôtel de la Poste; we have left it for our château; but, thanks to the rivalry which has always existed between the *Poste* and the *Mulet*, where Monsieur de Trailles has his headquarters, we have continued to maintain friendly relations with our former residence, the zeal and goodwill of mine host being due to the fact that he had a considerable share, and a very profitable share, I fancy, in furnishing the great banquet which I have had the honor to describe to you. Now, we have learned through him that, immediately after our departure, a newspaper man from Paris was set down at his hotel. That gentleman, whose name I forget,—and it is as well for his honor that I have forgotten it, considering the glorious character of his mission,—that gentleman, I say, announced himself as a giant-killer, who had come to reënforce with his Parisian *verve* the polemics which the local press, subsidized by the *bureau of public intelligence*, had been instructed to discharge at us. Thus far the incident was not very amusing, nor very depressing either, for that matter; since the world began, governments have always found pens for sale, and they never fail to buy them; but the comedy begins with the simultaneous arrival and co-presence, at the Hôtel de la Poste, of a damsel of very problematical virtue, in whose company His Excellency Monseigneur the ministerial journalist has appeared in town. The young woman's name, by the way, has not slipped my mind; on her passport she is described as Mademoiselle Chocardelle, annuitant; but the journalist, in speaking of her, never calls her anything but Antonia, and, when he wishes to be more respectful, Mademoiselle or Miss Antonia.

But why has Mademoiselle Chocardelle come to Arcis? A pleasure trip, I suppose; or to act as escort to Monsieur le Journaliste, who probably intends to assign her a share in the credit which will be opened in his name on the books of the secret-service fund, in payment of his contract for daily defamation of our character? No, madame, Mademoiselle Chocardelle comes to Arcis on business, for revenue. It would seem that, prior to his departure for Africa, where he met a glorious death, young Charles Keller executed to Mademoiselle Chocardelle, *or order*, a note for ten thousand francs, *value received in furniture*,—a charming ambiguity, as the furniture may have been *received* by Mademoiselle Chocardelle herself, so that she estimated at ten thousand francs the sacrifice she made in accepting it. However that may be, a few days after the news of her debtor's decease, the note being near maturity, Mademoiselle Antonia called at the office of Keller Frères to find out if it would be paid. The cashier, who is a surly fellow, like all cashiers, answered that he did not understand how Mademoiselle Antonia could have the face to present such a note, but that his employers, Keller Frères, were for the moment at Gondreville, where the family had all assembled on receipt of the fatal news, and that he would not pay it without submitting it to them.

"Very well, I will submit it to them myself," said Mademoiselle Antonia, who did not propose to let her claim be nonsuited.

Thereupon, just as she was considering the expediency of setting out for Arcis alone, the government felt called upon to have insults heaped upon us, wittier, at least, if not more gross, than provincial editors have at their command, and the duty of instilling gall into them was entrusted to a journalist of uncertain age, upon whom Mademoiselle Antonia, in Charles Keller's absence, had bestowed her favors! "I am going to Arcis," the scribe and the damsel evidently said to each other in the same breath; such coincidences happen in the most humdrum, commonplace existences. Is it very wonderful, therefore, that, having started together, they arrive together and alight at the same place? And now, madame, observe and admire the sequence of things! Having journeyed hither on a purely pecuniary errand, lo and behold! Mademoiselle Chocardelle has assumed tremendous electoral importance! and you will see if her good influence is not calculated to compensate us for the stinging blows that her gallant companion came here to inflict upon us. In the first place, it appears that, upon learning of the presence in Arcis of Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, Mademoiselle Chocardelle cried:

"What! he here, that beastly sot?"

The expression is by no means parliamentary, and I blush as I write it. But it was called forth by anterior relations, business relations, mind you, which

Mademoiselle Antonia had had with the illustrious confidant of the ministerial policy. Being accustomed to pay court to none but great ladies, who would assist in the extinction of his debt rather than labor to increase it, Monsieur de Trailles had, for once in his life, the whim of desiring not to be loved altogether on his own account, and to show himself in the guise of a lover less costly than useful. Consequently, he purchased from Mademoiselle Antonia a reading-room on Rue Coquenard, where she had held sway for some time. But the enterprise was unsuccessful; a settlement with his creditors became necessary, and Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, with his mind still bent upon business, complicated the settlement by purchasing the furniture of the establishment, which, through the manœuvring of a rascal infinitely more cunning than he, slipped stealthily from his hands.—See *A Man of Business*.—Thus Mademoiselle Antonia had the pleasure of seeing her furniture vanish, the vans being already at the door, and another siren, one Hortense, also an annuitant and a mistress of old Lord Dudley, made twenty-five louis at her expense. You will understand, madame, that I do not pretend to set forth all these details with absolute clearness, especially as they have come to us at second-hand through the hostess of the Poste, to whom they were confided by Mademoiselle Antonia, in much more coherent and lucid fashion, I doubt not. The fact remains that Monsieur de Trailles and Mademoiselle Chocardelle parted as enemies, and that the latter considers herself entitled at the present time to speak of him with the freedom and absolute lack of decorum which must have impressed you as it did me. Indeed, since Mademoiselle Antonia's first explosion, matters seem to have reached a point where Monsieur de Trailles, as a result of that remark or other similar ones, finding that his influence is seriously endangered, has requested the journalist, with whom he is naturally thrown much in contact, to discipline his indiscreet companion a little; but she pays no heed to him, and by an endless succession of remarks and anecdotes, she produces in our favor, I will not say the effect of a countermine, but the continuous effect of a *counter-Maxime*, by means whereof the venomous activity of our formidable adversary is constantly paralyzed. Nor is that all: there is still another service for which we are indebted to Mademoiselle Chocardelle's presence at Arcis. The affair of her note drags its slow length along; she has been twice to Gondreville; she has never been admitted there. The journalist has a great deal to do: in the first place his articles, and secondly a considerable number of duties imposed upon him by Monsieur de Trailles, at whose disposal he has been placed. Mademoiselle Antonia is often alone therefore, and, in the idleness and *ennui* caused by her solitude as well as the absence of the Opera, Ranelagh, and the Boulevard des Italiens, she has been driven to create for herself a truly desperate form of diversion. Although at first glance almost incredible, this pastime is by no means impossible to comprehend in the case of a Parisian woman of her species, banished to Arcis. Two steps from the Hôtel de la Poste there is a bridge over the Aube. Below the bridge you go down to the river-bank by a somewhat steep incline in which a path has been cut; the bank, being lower than the public highway, on which there is little travel, by the way, promises treasures of tranquillity and solitude to anyone who chooses to go thither to dream to the plashing of the water. Mademoiselle Antonia began by going and sitting there with a book; but books, she says, remembering the ill-success of her reading-room, perhaps, are not to her taste; so that the hostess of the Poste, noticing that she was more and more at a loss what to do with herself, conceived the idea of placing at her disposal a very complete fishing outfit, collected by her husband, but almost never used by him because of his multifarious occupations. The pretty exile, being decidedly lucky in her first attempts, has taken a liking to that avocation, which must certainly be very alluring, considering the numerous fanatics it makes, and from that day to this, at almost any hour, the few persons who cross the bridge have the privilege, despite the variations of the still uncertain temperature, of contemplating with admiration, upon the shores of the Aube, a charming naiad in a flounced skirt and broad-brimmed straw hat, fishing with the conscientious gravity of the most enthusiastic Paris *gamin*.

Thus far all is plain sailing, and our election does not seem particularly concerned with this fishing; but if you will recall, in the *History of Don Quixote*, which you love, madame, because of the jovial and sound common sense with which the book is running over,—if you will recall an unpleasant adventure that befell Rosinante with certain Yanguesan mule-drivers, you will have, even before I have told you, a premonition of the good fortune which we owe to the sudden development of this passion in Mademoiselle Antonia. Our rival Beauvisage is not simply an ex-hosier and an exemplary mayor, he is also a model husband, having never failed in his duty to his wife, whom he respects and admires. By her orders he goes to bed before ten o'clock every evening, while Madame Beauvisage and her daughter go into what it is proper to call Arcis society. But there is no worse water than standing water, they say, even as no one could be less chaste and less well-behaved than the calm and placid Rosinante in the adventure to which I referred a moment ago. Be that as it may, Beauvisage, while walking about *his* town, as he has the praiseworthy habit of doing every day, spied from the bridge the fair Parisian intent upon her favorite occupation, with her arm stretched out in virile fashion and her body gracefully thrown back. A slight fascinating gesture of impatience, with which the pretty fishermaid pulled her line out of the water when the fish did not bite, may have been the electric shock that reached the heart of the hitherto irreproachable magistrate. However, no one can say how or at what precise moment the thing was done. I should state that, between his retirement from the cotton cap business and his elevation to the mayoralty, Beauvisage himself had practised the art of angling with distinguished ability, and he would certainly be practising it to-day, had not his grandeur, unlike that of Louis XIV., *kept him from the shore.* It seemed to him, I doubt not, that the poor child, having more good will than science, did not go about it as she ought, and it is not impossible that, she being temporarily one of his subjects, the idea of setting her right was the cause of his apparent fall from grace. Certain it is that Mademoiselle Beauvisage, happening to cross the bridge with her mother, cried out like a genuine *enfant terrible:*

"Look, there's papa talking with the Parisian lady!"

To make sure by a glance of the enormity of the crime, to descend the slope with hasty step, to arrive within reach of her husband whom she found laughing with the joyous expression of a browsing sheep, to strike him dumb with a *What are you doing here?* to leave him no other refuge than the Aube, and with a regal air to issue an order to retreat, while Mademoiselle Chocardelle, surprised at first, divined the state of affairs and indulged in peal after peal of uncontrollable hilarity—such, madame, was the course adopted by Madame Beauvisage, *née* Grévin; and although that course may be deemed to have been justified, it certainly was not judicious, for the whole town knew of the catastrophe the same evening, and Monsieur Beauvisage, being accused and convicted of deplorable morals, found that his phalanx, already sadly decimated, was farther reduced by new desertions. However, the Gondreville-Grévin interest still held firm, and would you believe, madame, that we are indebted to Mademoiselle Antonia for the capture of that last rampart also? This was how the phenomenon came to pass: Mother Marie des Anges wished to have an interview with the Comte de Gondreville, but she did not know how to go about it; to ask for it did not seem to her quite proper. As she had some harsh things to say to him, apparently, she did not wish to make the old man come to her for the sole purpose of listening to them; such a course seemed to her to be too uncharitable. Moreover, threatening words, when discharged point-blank, provoke as often as they terrify; whereas, if insinuated mildly, as they say, they are much more sure of their effect. Meanwhile, time was flying, for the election is to be held to-morrow, Sunday, and the preliminary meeting is to-night. The poor dear lady really was in sad perplexity as to what she should do, when she heard of something most flattering to her self-esteem. A pretty fisher-lass, who had come to Arcis for the purpose of squeezing money out of Keller, Gondreville's son-in-law, had heard of the virtues, the inexhaustible kindness of heart, the green old age of Mother Marie des Anges, in a word, of all that people said of her in the neighborhood of which she is the greatest curiosity, after Danton; and this girl regretted nothing so much as that she did not dare to ask to be admitted to her presence. An hour later the following note was delivered at the Hôtel de la Poste:

"MADEMOISELLE,

"I am told that you wish to see me and that you do not know how to gratify your wish. Nothing can be easier, however: ring the bell at the door of my sober house, ask for me of the sister who answers the door, do not be over-dismayed by my black dress and old face, and do not think that I force my advice upon pretty girls who do not ask it and who may some day be much greater saints than I. That is all the mystery that surrounds an interview with Mother Marie des Anges, who salutes you in Our Lord Jesus Christ. ✠"

You understand, madame, that an invitation couched in such gracious language is not to be declined; and ere long, Mademoiselle Antonia repaired to the convent in the most puritanical costume imaginable. I would that I could give you all the details of that interview, which must certainly have been interesting; but no one was present, and it has been impossible to learn anything concerning it beyond what has been divulged by the poor stray lamb, who returned deeply moved and affected to tears. When the journalist attempted to joke her upon what he called the airs of a new convert, she replied:

"Hush! be quiet! you never wrote such a sentence in all your life!"

"Let's hear the sentence."

"'I tell you, my child,' the good old lady said to me, 'the ways of God are very wonderful and very little known, and there is often more of the stuff of which saints are made in a Magdalen than in a nun.' "

And I ought to say, madame, that, as she repeated those lovely words, the poor girl's voice broke, and she was obliged to put her handkerchief to her eyes. The journalist, one of the vile creatures, the disgrace of the press, who ought not to be allowed to cast discredit upon it, any more than a wicked priest upon religion,—the journalist began to laugh, and, scenting danger at once, he said:

"By the way, when are you going to Gondreville again to speak to that Keller, whom I shall end by *using up* in a little article, notwithstanding Maxime's directions to the contrary?"

"Do you suppose I would do such a dirty thing?" retorted Antonia, with dignity.

"What! you're not going to present your note again?"

"I go and *bleed* a mourning family!" replied the admirer, and probably the echo of Mother Marie des Anges, but in her own language; "why, the memory of it would stab me on my death-bed, and I could never believe that God would have mercy on me."

"Well, then, go and be an Ursuline, while we're here."

"If I had the courage to do it, I might be happier; but, at all events, I shall not go to Gondreville; Mother Marie des Anges has undertaken to arrange everything for me."

"What, you poor fool, you left your note with her?"

"I wanted to tear it up; she stopped me, and told me to give it to her, and said she would arrange to get something out of it for me."

"Very good, you were a creditor, and you'll be a beggar—"

"No, for I give alms myself; I told madame la supérieure to keep the money for her poor."

"Oho! in that case, if you propose to become a benefactress of convents, in addition to your other vice of fishing, you will be a cheerful sort of girl to associate with!"

"You will not associate with me long, anyway, for I am going away to-night, and I leave you to your charming trade."

"Ah! are you going into retirement at the Carmelites?"

"The Carmelites is a very good place, old fellow," retorted Antonia, wittily, "when you leave Louis XIV."

These girls, even the most ignorant of them, all knew the story of La Vallière, whom they would surely have taken for their patron saint, if *Sister Louise de la Miséricorde* had been canonized. I don't know how Mother Marie des Anges accomplished it, but the Comte de Gondreville's carriage was seen at the gate of the convent this morning; the miracle, be it understood, does not consist in having lured the old fox from his hole; for as soon as he heard of a suggestion of ten thousand francs to be paid, although the amount was not to come from his purse, but from Keller's, he was certain to lose no time in answering the summons; it is all in the family; and then misers like him take a passionate interest in another's loss of funds, when they do not consider them well spent. But Mother Marie des Anges was not content with enticing the old man to the convent; she has apparently attended to our business also. On leaving her, the peer of France called upon his friend Grévin; and, during the day, the latter said to several persons that his son-in-law was really too stupid, that he had compromised himself again in the matter of that Parisian woman, and that nothing could ever be made of him. At the same time it was announced that the curés of the two parish churches had received, through Mother Marie des Anges, the sum of three thousand francs, to be distributed among their poor;—the gift of a benefactor who did not wish to be known. Sallenauve is in a rage because some of our agents are going about telling everyone that he is the anonymous benefactor, and many people believe it, although the story of the Keller note has become widely known, and the honor due to that generous act can readily be bestowed upon its true author. But when you have the wind astern you cannot distribute it with mathematical precision among the sails, and you must often take more of it than you want. Monsieur Maxime de Trailles's temper does not improve; there is good reason to believe that the defeat, which he must now see to be inevitable, will bury his marriage with him. We must apply to him, apropos of his ill fortune, the tiresome phrase applied to unlucky authors: "He is a bright man, and will have his revenge."

What a curious man, madame, is this organist, who bears the name of one of our greatest physicians, Bricheteau, although he is not related to him. No one could display more energy, more self-possession, more devotion, more intelligence, and there are not two men in Europe who play the organ as he does. If you do not wish Naïs to be a *pianoteuse*, you should have her take lessons of him. There's a man who would really teach her music, and he would never alarm you with his grandeur, for his modesty is equal to his talent; with Sallenauve he is like a dog; as clever and faithful, and I would say as ugly, except that a man with a kindly, open countenance like his might be considered handsome.

*

MARIE-GASTON TO LA COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE

Arcis-sur-Aube, Sunday, May 12, 1839.

MADAME,

Last evening, the preliminary meeting took place, a most absurd ceremony and especially disagreeable to the candidates, but something that must be endured. When one is about to enter into an engagement for four or five years with a representative, it is natural to want to know what sort of man he is. Is he a man of intellect? does he really entertain the opinions of the party whose ticket he wears? Will he be courteous and approachable to those who may have to ask his attention to their interests? Has he firmness of character? will he be able to defend his ideas—if he has any? In a word, will the constituency be worthily, reliably, and honestly represented by him? That is the serious and respectable side of the institution which, not being written in the law, must certainly have a powerful reason for existence in order to be so firmly established in custom. But every medallion has its reverse side, and from another standpoint your attention may be directed to the elector, puffed up with a sense of his own importance, eager to make an outward show of the sovereignty he is about to resign into the hands of his deputy, and selling it to him at as high a price as possible.

From the impertinent character of many of the questions addressed to the candidate, you would say that he was a serf over whom every elector had the right of life or death. There is no remote corner of his private life to which the poor wretch can be sure that no indiscreet curiosity will find its way; and anything is possible in the way of ridiculous questions, as, for instance: "Why does the candidate prefer Champagne to Bordeaux wine?" At Bordeaux, where the vintage is a religion, such a preference would arouse a suspicion of lack of patriotism and might seriously endanger his election. Many electors attend simply to enjoy the embarrassment of the rival claimants. Having them, as they say, on the stool of repentance, they expect to amuse themselves with them, as a child amuses himself with his cockchafer, or the old judges of an earlier day and young physicians of to-day with the torture of a criminal, an autopsy, or an operation. Some have not such lofty tastes; these come simply to enjoy the uproar, the confusion of voices, which are almost certain features of such an occasion; there are those who see an opportunity for the exhibition of some pleasant accomplishment: for instance, at one of the moments, unfortunately too frequent, when, as the reports of debates in the Chamber of Deputies express it, *the tumult is at its height*, it is no rare thing to hear a wonderfully accurate imitation of the crowing of a cock, or a dog's cry of pain, when some one treads on his paw. Intellect, which alone should be entitled to suffrage, having, like

D'Aubigné, Madame de Maintenon's brother, *received its silver bâton,* ought we to be astonished if stupid people are met with among the electors, and are not such people sufficiently numerous in society to be entitled to representation?

The meeting was held in a room of considerable size, in which a *restaurateur* of the town gives dancing-parties every Sunday; the orchestra occupies a small gallery, to which a few of the public who are not electors can be admitted; I was one of those privileged few. Several ladies had taken their places in the front row: Madame Marion, aunt of the advocate Giguet, one of the candidates; Madame and Mademoiselle Mollot, wife and daughter of the clerk of the court, and some others whose names and rank have escaped me; but Madame and Mademoiselle Beauvisage had followed the example of Brutus and Cassius,—they were resplendent by their absence. Before Monsieur Beauvisage was brought forward as a candidate, Monsieur Simon Giguet seemed to have the best chance; now, with our friend Sallenauve, who in his turn has outstripped the mayor, the advocate has fallen back two stages. His father, a colonel under the Empire, is greatly esteemed in the province; as an expression of the regret of the electors that they were unable to elect his son *for him,* they chose him chairman of the meeting unanimously and by acclamation. The first candidate heard was the advocate Giguet; his speech was long and full of commonplaces; few questions were asked him that deserve to be noted in the present report. You felt at once that he had no part in the real battle. Then Monsieur Beauvisage was called for. Maître Achille Pigoult, the notary, took the floor and said:

"Monsieur le Maire has been ill since yesterday with a trouble, which—"

The orator was interrupted by shouts of "ah! ah!" and outbursts of laughter.

Colonel Giguet lustily rang the bell with which they had taken care to provide him, but was unable to restore silence. At the first pause, Maître Pigoult resumed:

"I had the honor to say to you, messieurs, that, suffering from an indisposition which, while it is not serious—"

Here there was another interruption a little noisier than the first. Like all soldiers, Colonel Giguet is not of a very long-suffering disposition, nor very parliamentary in his speech; he rose with some heat, and cried:

"Messieurs, you are not at the Bal Frappart,"—Frappart is the name of the proprietor of the hall,—"I request you, therefore, to behave more decently; otherwise I shall leave the chair."

We must believe that men, in a body, like to be driven roughly, for that little lecture was received with rapturous applause, and silence appeared to be reëstablished on a firm basis.

"I regret to inform you, therefore," Maître Achille Pigoult began once more, varying his exordium each time, "that, suffering from an indisposition which, while it is not at all serious, will keep him to his room for a few days—"

"A disease of the larynx!" cried a voice.

"Our worshipful and excellent mayor," continued Pigoult, without heeding the interruption, "is unable to take part in this meeting. However, Madame Beauvisage, by whom I had the honor to be received this evening, declared to me and instructed me to say to you that, *for the present,* Monsieur Beauvisage declined the honor of your suffrages, requesting those among you who have shown him sympathy and goodwill to transfer them to Monsieur Simon Giguet."

This Achille Pigoult is a mischievous person who had a well-defined purpose in bringing in the name of Madame Beauvisage, whose conjugal supremacy he thus asserted. But the meeting was too thoroughly characteristic of the province to heed this little villainy. In the provinces, too, the women freely take part in all their husbands' affairs, even those least fitted to them; and the old story of the curé's maid-servant who answered gravely: "We don't say masses at that price," has a savor which would not attract attention in many small towns. At last Sallenauve's turn came, and I was impressed at the outset by the ease of manner and calm dignity with which he ascended the *tribune*. It is a very comforting omen, madame, for other more serious tests, for it is unquestionably the fact that the quality and intelligence of the persons before whom one speaks are of very little consequence.

To the orator with fear at his heels, great lords and porters are the same thing. There are eyes that look at you and ears that listen to you; you no longer have a number of individuals before you, but one huge moral person, the meeting, whose presence you feel, *en masse*, without analyzing its elements.—After enumerating in a few words the bonds by which he is connected with the province, and insinuating a very adroit and very dignified allusion to his birth, which *did not resemble that of most others*, Sallenauve set forth his political opinions. The republic seems to him the ideal form of government, but he does not think it possible to establish a republic in France; consequently he does not desire it. He thinks that a truly parliamentary government, in which *camarilla* politics were so thoroughly muzzled that there would be nothing to fear from their incessant escapades and never-ending enterprises, might contribute largely to the dignity and prosperity of a nation. Liberty and equality, those two great principles which triumphed in '89, receive all needful guaranties from such a government. As for the juggling tricks which the royal power may attempt to play upon them, it is not the part of the institutions of the country to ward them off. Under such circumstances men and morals are to be looked to, rather than laws, and he, Sallenauve, will be one of those living obstacles. He declares himself a warm partisan of liberty of instruction, believes that still further saving is possible in the Budget, and that there are too many office-holders in the Chamber, and especially that the château is too well represented there. To retain his independence, he has decided to accept no office, no favor from the government. Nor are they who shall have elected him to expect that he will ever undertake to do anything in their interest which is not fully sanctioned by reason and justice. It has been said that the word *impossible* is not a French word. There is, however, so far as he is concerned, one impossibility which he recognizes, and before which he will always consider that he honors himself by pausing—the impossibility of doing an injustice or of encroaching, even in the remotest degree, upon any lawful right. (Uproarious applause).

When silence was restored:

"Monsieur," said one of the electors, after obtaining the floor from the chairman, "you have said that you would accept no office from the government. Is that not, by implication, a condemnation of those who hold office? My name is Godivet, I am recorder of mortgages, and I do not think that I ought, for that reason, to incur the contempt of my honorable fellow-citizens."

Sallenauve's reply:

"I am very glad, monsieur, to learn that the government has clothed you with functions which you perform, I am sure, with absolute uprightness and the greatest skill; but I will venture to ask you if you were appointed to the office you now hold, at one leap?"

"Certainly not, monsieur. I began by serving three years as substitute; then I passed through all the grades, and I can assert that favor has never had anything to do with my modest promotion."

"Very well, monsieur, what would you say if, with my title of deputy, assuming that I obtain the suffrages of this arrondissement, I who have never been a substitute, who have passed through no inferior grade, but may simply have rendered ministers the service of voting with them—what would you say if I should suddenly be appointed—such things have been done—general manager of your office?"

"I would say—I would say, monsieur, that it was a very excellent choice, since the king would have appointed you."

"No, monsieur, you would not say so, or, if you did say so aloud, which I do not think is possible, you would say under your breath that it was an absurd and unjust choice. 'Where in the devil,' you would ask, 'can this gentleman, while carving statues, have studied the delicate matter of keeping records?' And you would do right not to justify the royal whim, for what becomes of acquired rights, long and honorable service, regular progress by promotion, in this system of choice at the king's pleasure? It is to avoid making myself an accomplice of the crying abuse which I denounce, it is because I do not consider it just or honest or for the good of the State that one should be thus raised to the highest public office, that I, who can claim no fitness for any office, bind myself to accept none. Do you still think that I despise those offices, monsieur,—do I not rather seem greatly to honor them?"

Monsieur Godivet declared himself satisfied, and did not persist.

"Look here, monsieur," cried another elector, after addressing the chairman in a somewhat vinous voice, "you say that you won't ask anything for your electors; if that's so, what good will you do us?"

"I didn't say, my friend, that I would ask nothing for my constituents; I said that I would ask nothing that was not just; but whatever is just, I may add, I will demand with persevering energy, for justice should always be so served."

"That's all right," rejoined the elector, "but there's other ways of serving her; for instance, the lawsuit I lost against Jean Remy, him as I had trouble with about a boundary—"

Colonel Giguet, interrupting:

"Well, well, I hope you are not going to tell us about your lawsuit and speak in an improper way about the magistrates."

The elector, resuming:

"I respect the magistrates, my colonel, for I was a member of the town council for six weeks in '93 and I know the law; but, to return to my business, I ask monsieur, who's here to answer me and others, his opinion about tobacco agencies."

"My opinion about tobacco agencies! that seems to me a difficult matter to form an opinion about; I may say, however, that if certain information I have is accurate, they do not seem to me to be distributed always with perfect fairness."

"Well, you're a man, you are!" cried the elector, "and I give you my vote because no one will ever make you show false colors. Do they give out the agencies unfairly! What about Jean Remy's daughter, and he a bad neighbor that never was good for anything except at his plough and fights all day with his wife."

"But, my dear fellow," said the president, "you are abusing the patience of the meeting beyond measure."

"No! no! let him speak!" the cries came from all parts of the room.

The elector was entertaining, and Sallenauve himself apparently gave the colonel to understand that he wanted to know what the man was driving at.

The elector, continuing:

"I will say, then, with all respect to you, my dear colonel, that there's Jean Remy's daughter.—I'll hunt him into hell, because my boundstone was in the right place and the experts were mistaken! Well, what does that girl do? Leaves her father and mother and goes to Paris; what does she do in Paris? I've not been there to see her; but she scrapes acquaintance with a deputy, and at this minute she's got a tobacco agency on Rue Mouffetard, one of the longest streets in Paris, and yet, if I was to turn up my toes to-morrow, you'd see how my wife, the widow of a lawful man, all tied up with rheumatism on account of sleeping in the woods in the terror of 1815, you'd see if she'd get hold of a tobacco agency!"

"You're not dead yet!" several voices suggested in response to these strange ideas of meritorious service.

And the colonel, to put an end to this burlesque incident, gave the floor to a little pastry-cook, a well-known republican. This new interrogator propounded to Sallenauve, in a falsetto voice, this insidious question which, at Arcis, might be called a national question.

"What does monsieur think of Danton?"

"Monsieur Dauphin," said the chairman, "I have the honor to remind you that Danton belongs to history."

"To the *Pantheon of history*, Monsieur le Président, that's his own expression."

"Well, whether it's plain history, or the Pantheon of history, Danton doesn't seem to have anything to do with this meeting."

"Allow me, Monsieur le Président," said Sallenauve, "although the question does not seem to me to have any direct bearing on the object of this meeting, in a town which the name just pronounced still fills with its renown, I could not neglect the opportunity which is afforded me to prove my impartiality and independence by giving my opinion of that man."

"Yes! yes! go on!" cried the meeting, almost with one voice.

"I am firmly convinced," continued Sallenauve, "that, if Danton had been born in a calm and peaceful epoch like our own, he would have shown himself what he really was, a good father, a good husband, a warm-hearted, loyal friend, of compliant and easy temper, and that, by virtue of his great talents, he would not have failed to rise to an eminent position in the State and in society."

"Yes! yes! bravo! very good!"

"Born, on the contrary, in troublous times, and amid the tempest caused by the unchaining of all the fiercest passions of mankind, Danton was better fitted than any other to apply the torch to that atmosphere of flame. Danton was the torch that consumes, and his lurid light lent itself only too readily to scenes that I do not wish to recall. But, it has been said, it was necessary to preserve the national independence, to strike terror to the hearts of traitors and perfidious villains, to make, in a word, a cruel but unavoidable sacrifice to the demands of the public welfare. I do not accept those excuses, messieurs; to kill, without proof, twenty times renewed, that slaughter was a necessary part of the legitimate defence of the country; to kill unarmed men, women, prisoners, is, on any hypothesis, an execrable crime; and they who ordered, they who allowed it to be done, as well as they who executed it, are included, so far as I am concerned, in the same condemnation."

I wish, madame, that I were able to describe Sallenauve's accent and expression as he pronounced that anathema. You know how his face is transfigured under the influence of intense emotion. The meeting was dumb and unresponsive; it evidently was offended, but under his strong hand his steed did not dare to rear.

"But," he continued, "for every consummated and irreparable crime, there are two issues, repentance and expiation. Danton did not put his repentance into *words,* he was too proud for that; he did better, he *acted* it, and he, first of all, to the sound of the knife of the beheading machine, which was working without rest or respite, he, first of all, at the risk of hastening his turn to lose his own head, dared to suggest a *committee of clemency.* It was an almost infallible method of calling down expiation on his head, and we all know whether, when the day of expiation came, he shrank from it! We may say, messieurs, that in his death, hastened by his courageous effort to stay the effusion of blood, Danton's face and figure were purged of the red stain that September had left upon them. Passing at one step into posterity, at the age of thirty-five, Danton will bequeath to it the memory of a great intellect, of a strong and powerful character, of many estimable qualities in private life, of more than one generous action; all of which were characteristic of himself, while his detestable errors were due to the contagion of his time. In a word, in dealing with men of that stamp, the justice that should decline to temper itself with indulgence would be unjust; and, messieurs, better than you, better than I, better than all the historians and orators, a woman has understood and judged Danton—the woman who, in an admirable outburst of charity, said to those who had no mercy upon him: 'He has gone to God! let us pray for the repose of his soul.'"

The snare thus avoided by the adroit reminder of Mother Marie des Anges, and the meeting being apparently satisfied, it might be supposed that the candidate was at the end of his trial. Indeed, the colonel was already on the point of suggesting that the vote be taken, when several electors declared that they wished to ask the candidate's views on two other important subjects. Sallenauve had said that he would always be found in the path of any attempted juggling with the institutions of the country on the part of the royal power. They wanted to know what he meant by that. Did he mean armed resistance, *émeutes*, barricades?

"Barricades," Sallenauve replied, "have almost always seemed to me to be machines which, by their own action, turn upon and grind to powder those who set them up; we must believe that it is in the nature of *émeutes* also to serve the interests of the government on almost every occasion, for I have never known one that the police were not accused of having organized. Such resistance as I shall offer will always be lawful resistance, by lawful means, the press, the tribune, and patience, that great force of the oppressed and vanquished."

If you were familiar with Latin, madame, I would say to you: *In cauda venenum*, that is to say, the poison is found in the serpent's tail, a remark of the ancients which modern science has not ratified.

Monsieur de l'Estorade was not mistaken, they were determined to ransack Sallenauve's private life, and, under the inspiration, doubtless, of the virtuous Maxime de Trailles, who had already caused several allusions to be made to the subject by the journalist who does his dirty work, our friend was at last called to account on the subject of the fair Italian, whom he is *hiding* in his house at Paris. Sallenauve displayed no more embarrassment than before you and Monsieur de l'Estorade; he simply asked the question whether the meeting desired that its time should be taken up listening to a romantic story which would seem to have been written for the front page of a newspaper. Such assemblages, madame, as your husband can tell you, are great children who are not at all afraid of listening to stories—

But here comes Sallenauve, and he tells me that the board of judges of the electoral college was constituted in a way that seems to point to the success of his candidacy; I pass the pen to him, he will himself undertake to tell you the story that he cheated you of at the time of his last visit to you, and this letter will be closed by him.

SALLENAUVE TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

7 P.M.

MADAME,

The somewhat abrupt manner in which I took leave of you and Monsieur de l'Estorade on the evening of our visit to Collége Henri IV. has been explained to you doubtless ere now by the preoccupations of every sort to which I was then a prey; I know that Marie-Gaston has told you of their result. I confess that in my then anxious and disturbed frame of mind the sort of credit that Monsieur de l'Estorade seemed to place in the scandal that he mentioned to me caused me some pain and some surprise. "How is it possible," I thought, "that a man of Monsieur de l'Estorade's intelligence and moral opinions can, *a priori*, believe me to be guilty of such dissolute conduct, when he sees how careful I am to live my life in other respects with all the gravity and prudence that can merit esteem? But for him, with the idea that he has of my extraordinary laxity of morals, to admit me to his house and to his wife's presence on a more or less intimate footing, would be so imprudent that it must be that I am at this moment enjoying only a precarious and provisional courtesy at his hands. The memory of a still recent service rendered by me has made the pretence of goodwill seem necessary, but they will break with me at the first opportunity;" and it seemed to me that evening, madame, that the position in two hostile camps, soon to be assigned us by our political opinions, might well be the pretext that Monsieur de l'Estorade would seize to throw me back altogether upon what he called my shameful liaison. An hour before I observed those distressing symptoms, I had made a confidential communication to you which, I thought, ought at least to preserve me from the misfortune of discovering that Monsieur de l'Estorade's unfortunate prejudice had made an impression upon you. I did not, therefore, see the immediate necessity of presenting my justification to you; two long stories in the same evening seemed to me likely to subject your patience to too severe a test. As for Monsieur de l'Estorade, I was, I confess, annoyed with him, when I saw how recklessly he allowed himself to echo a calumny against which, it seemed to me, that I should have been more effectively defended by the nature of the relations that had existed between us, and I did not *deign* to enter into an explanation with him: I withdraw that word to-day, but it accurately expressed at that time a vexation that I felt very keenly. By the hazard of my electoral contest, I have been led to give to a large audience the first fruits of my justification, and I had the pleasure of discovering that men in a body are more capable than individuals of comprehending generous resolutions, and distinguishing *true* language from the truth. I was obliged, madame, under conditions which were so unexpected and unusual as to border very closely on the ridiculous, to tell an assemblage composed of very diverse elements certain things that seemed really incredible; perhaps Monsieur de l'Estorade, in his salon, would not have accepted them except under an agreement to hold harmless; whereas, in that meeting, they were apparently received with confidence and sympathy. These are almost the exact words I used to my auditors, and this is the story I was called upon to tell them:

Some months before my departure from Rome, we pupils of the Academy were favored almost every evening with the company of an Italian named Benedetto, at the café where we were in the habit of assembling. Ostensibly, he was a musician, a very fair musician, too; but we had been warned that he was also a spy of the Roman police, which fact explained his constant attendance at our meetings and his great liking for our society. However that may have been, he was a very amusing clown, and as we had extremely little dread of the Roman police, we did more than suffer the fellow's presence, we encouraged him to come,—a not very difficult undertaking, by the way, in view of his well-known passion for *zabajon, poncio spongato,* and *spuma di latte.* One evening, as he entered the room, one of my comrades hailed him by asking him who the woman was with whom he had met him that morning.

"My wife, signore!" replied the Italian, bridling up.

"What! Benedetto! you the husband of such a beauty!"

"Yes, signore, by your leave."

"Nonsense! you're an ugly little sot. They say, too, that you're a police spy; she, on the other hand, is as beautiful as the huntress Diana."

"I fascinated her by my musical talent; she fairly pined away for me."

"In that case, if she's your wife, you ought to let her pose for our friend Dorlange, who is at work on a *Pandora* at this moment. We shall never find another such magnificent model."

"That can be arranged," the Italian replied.

Thereupon he started upon one of his entertaining buffooneries, and I entirely forgot the proposition in which he had shown so little interest. The next day I was in my studio, with several painters and sculptors, my fellow-pupils, when Benedetto appeared, accompanied by an exquisitely beautiful woman. I do not need to describe her, madame, for you have seen her. A glad shout of welcome greeted the Italian, who said to me:

"*Ecco la Pandora!* Well, what do you think of her?"

"Wonderfully lovely; but is she willing to pose?"

"Pshaw!" said Benedetto, in a tone which implied: "I would just like to see her refuse!"

"But," I observed, "I shall have to pay very dear to have such beauty for a model."

"*No, per l'onore;* but you must make a bust of me, a simple terra-cotta, and make her a present of it."

"Well, messieurs," I said to my friends, "suppose you leave us alone."

No one heard me; judging the wife by the husband, all the greedy youngsters were crowding about the fair Italian, who, blushing hotly, agitated and offended by all those bold glances, had something of the appearance of a caged panther, teased by peasants at a country fair. Benedetto went to her, led her aside, and told her in Italian that the French gentleman wished to make her portrait from head to foot, and that she would have to remove her clothes.

The woman cast a withering glance at him and made for the door. Benedetto darted forward to detain her, and my companions, a typical studio crew, hastened to intercept her. Thereupon a struggle ensued between the husband and wife; but, as I saw that Benedetto supported his demands with the utmost brutality, anger got the better of me. I pushed the villain back with my hand, which luckily is reasonably powerful, and at the same time I said to my companions, in an authoritative tone:

"Come, let her pass!"

And I myself escorted the fair Italian, still trembling with excitement, to the door. She said a few words of thanks in Italian, and disappeared without further opposition from any quarter.

Returning to Benedetto, who was waving his arms about in a threatening way, I told him to leave the studio, that his conduct was infamous, and that, if I should learn that he maltreated his wife, he would have an account to settle with me.

"*Debole!*"—Idiot!—the knave retorted, shrugging his shoulders.

He went away, followed by the same shout that had greeted him on his arrival.

Several days passed; we saw no more of Benedetto, and at first we were somewhat disturbed; we even went so far as to look for him in the Transtevère, where we knew that he lived; but it is not an easy matter to find a person in that quarter; the pupils of the Academy are not in good odor with the Transteverines, who always suspect them of seeking to debauch their daughters or their wives, and the fellows are very ready with their knives. After a week we had ceased to think of the clown, as you can imagine. Three days before my departure from Rome, his wife entered my studio. She spoke bad French on that occasion.

"You are going to France," she said; "I have come here to have you take me."

"Take you with me! what about your husband?"

"Dead," she replied, calmly.

An idea came into my mind.

"You killed him, did you not?" I asked the Transteverine.

She nodded her head in assent, adding:

"But I tried to die *myself*, too."

"How so?" I asked.

"After he put that affront on me," replied the Italian, "he returned home, beat me as usual, and then went away for the whole day. He came back at night and threatened me with a pistol, which I snatched away from him; he was drunk; I threw the *briccone*—scoundrel—on his bed where he went to sleep. Then I stuffed the cracks in the doors and windows, piled a brazier full of charcoal and lighted it. I felt very bad in my head and didn't know anything until the next day, being taken care of by the neighbors, who had smelt the charcoal and burst in the door, but he was dead before."

"And the law?"

"The law knows all about it: also that he tried to sell me to an Englishman; why did he try to degrade me in your studio?—because he thought I would not resist as I did. The police said it was all right and told me to go; I confessed and I got absolution."

"But what will you do in France, *cara mia?* I am not rich like an Englishman."

A disdainful smile passed across the Italian's beautiful face.

"I won't cost you anything," she said; "on the contrary, I will save you a great deal."

"In what way?"

"I can be a model for your statues, if I do it of my own free will. Benedetto said that I was very well-made, and, more than that, an excellent housekeeper; if Benedetto had chosen, we could have made a happy household, for I have talent, too."

She ran and took down a guitar that hung on the wall in a corner of my studio, and began to sing a *bravura* air, accompanying herself with rare feeling.

"I will take lessons in France and go on the stage, where I shall have success," she said, when she had finished; "that was Benedetto's idea."

"But why not go on the stage in Italy?"

"Since Benedetto died, I hide: the Englishman wants to carry me off. I decide to go to France; I have learned French, you see; if I stay here, I jump into the Tiber."

I feared that by abandoning to her own resources a woman of such a character—rather awe-inspiring than fascinating, Monsieur de l'Estorade will agree—I should be responsible for some catastrophe, so I consented that Signora Luigia should accompany me to Paris. She keeps house for me with rare skill and economy; she herself offered to pose for *Pandora*, and you will believe me, madame, when I tell you that Benedetto's dead body was constantly between us during that hazardous experiment. I provided a teacher in singing for my housekeeper, and she is preparing to-day to make her début. Notwithstanding her projects in connection with the stage, being truly devout like all Italian women, she has become a member of the sisterhood of the Virgin, at Saint-Sulpice, our parish church, and during the *month of Marie,* which began a few days since, the renter of chairs counts upon her lovely voice to increase her receipts. She is a constant attendant at all the services, goes to confession and frequently attends communion, and her confessor, an estimable old priest, came to me recently to obtain a promise from me that she should not pose for any more statues for me, saying that she would never listen to him on that subject, in regard to which she considered herself bound in honor to me. I yielded the more readily to the excellent priest's urgent request, because it is my intention, if I am elected, which now seems very probable, to part from this woman; as I shall then occupy a position more in the public eye, she would be the object of gossip as injurious to her reputation and her future as to my own standing. I must expect some opposition on her part, for she seems to have formed a genuine attachment for me, of which she gave abundant proof in connection with the wound I received in that duel. Nothing could prevent her passing every night at my bedside, and the doctor said that, not even among the sisters at the hospital, had he ever met a more skilful nurse or one of warmer sympathies.

I have talked with Marie-Gaston concerning the difficulty I apprehend in effecting a separation. He fears it even more than I do, he says. Thus far Paris, to the poor girl's mind, has meant my house, and the idea of being cast adrift, alone, upon that ocean, of which she has not even had a glimpse, is of a nature to alarm her beyond measure. Marie-Gaston has made a suggestion on this subject: he does not believe that the intervention of the confessor will serve any useful purpose; he says that the penitent will cry out against this sacrifice, that she is being imposed upon by the harsh demands of a devotee; in a matter upon which he had a much clearer right to speak firmly and with authority, the holy man made a compromise, and she refused to pay any heed to his representations unless she were released by me from the strange *pledge of her honor*, as she called it. Marie-Gaston's idea is that the intervention and advice of one of her own sex, a person of exalted reputation for virtue and intelligence, would be much more efficacious in this case, and he declares that I know a person who answers those requirements, and who, in response to our joint entreaty, would consent to undertake that delicate negotiation. But, madame, where, I ask you, is the probability of the realization of that plan? The person to whom Marie-Gaston refers is to me only an acquaintance of yesterday, and one would hardly undertake such a mission even for an old friend. I well remember that you did me the honor to say to me, some time ago, that *some acquaintances ripen quickly*. Marie-Gaston says further that the person in question is extremely pious, extremely kind, extremely charitable, and that there may very well be something attractive to her in this idea of becoming the patroness of a poor abandoned creature; however, madame, on our return to town we will consult you, and you will tell us if her invaluable assistance can with propriety be requested. In any event I will beg you to be my mouthpiece with Monsieur de l'Estorade, and to say to him that I take pleasure in the hope that no trace may remain of the small cloud that had arisen between us. If I am elected, we shall be in opposite camps, I know; but, as it is not my intention to adopt an attitude of systematic opposition, on many questions we shall find ourselves on common ground, and I do not believe that he desires to *drive me to despair* by depriving me of his former goodwill.

To-morrow, madame, at this hour, I shall have sustained a defeat that will send me back forever to my artistic labors, or I shall have started upon a new career. Shall I tell you that the thought makes me anxious? The effect of looking forward into the unknown, I doubt not. I had almost forgotten to tell you some great news which makes you secure against all chances from *projectiles on the rebound*. I confided to Mother Marie des Anges, of whose miracles Marie-Gaston has told you, my suspicions concerning the violent measures taken with Mademoiselle de Lanty, and she is confident of discovering before long the convent in which she is detained. The excellent woman, if she sets about it in earnest, is quite capable of succeeding, and, with such a prospect of finding the original, the copy should have less reason to fear any transgression on my part.

I am not at all satisfied with Marie-Gaston: he seems to me to be in a state of feverish excitement caused by the immense interest that his friendship takes in my success. He is like an honest debtor, who, passionately expending all his energies to effect the payment of a sacred debt, holds everything in suspense, even his grief, until he shall have paid it. But I am afraid that a relapse will follow on the heels of this effort; his grief, which he is forcing back at this moment, has in reality lost nothing of its sting. Have you not been impressed by the light, mocking tone of his letters, of which he has read me some passages? That is not his nature; when he was happy all the time, he had no such paroxysms of tumultuous gayety. This is an acquired animation, due to the peculiar circumstances, and I fear that, when the electoral wind has subsided, his depression will return and he will escape us. He has consented to go to my house on his arrival in Paris, and not to visit Ville d'Avray until our return, and only in my company. This promise, which I asked of him with almost no hope of obtaining it, disturbs and worries me. Evidently he fears the memories that await him there, and will my presence be sufficient to deaden their shock? Old Philippe, whom he would not take with him to Italy, has orders to change nothing at the chalet, and judging him from what I know of him, he is too punctilious a servant not to have executed that order to the letter; so the poor fellow, surrounded by all those objects which will speak so loud to him, will be carried back to the day following his wife's death. And, more alarming still! he has not once mentioned her to me, nor has he allowed me to lead him up to the subject. Let us hope, however, that he will have simply one critical period to pass through, and that, by uniting all our energies, we shall succeed in soothing him anew.

We shall meet soon, madame; until then, victor or vanquished, I am always your most devoted and respectful servant.

MARIE-GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE

Arcis-sur-Aube, May 13, 1839.

We have had a narrow escape, while we slept, madame! And those stupid rioters, of whose incredible, blundering enterprise the telegraph informed us this morning, endangered our success for a moment. The news of the attempted insurrection, of which Paris was yesterday the theatre, being placarded through the town, by order of the sub-prefect, was skilfully turned to advantage by all the agents of the ministry.

"Elect a Democrat, by all means," they went about repeating everywhere, " so that his harangues may become the cartridges with which rebel muskets are loaded ! "

And that argument sowed confusion and hesitation in our ranks. Luckily, madame, as you will remember, a question was asked Sallenauve yesterday, at the preliminary meeting, which did not seem so pertinent at the time, but there was something prophetic in his reply. It occurred to Jacques Bricheteau to have the following broadside printed on a small sheet, and distributed in great numbers:

> "A BLOODY EMEUTE BROKE OUT YESTERDAY IN PARIS. When questioned as to the use of this wicked and desperate method of resistance, one of our candidates, Monsieur de Sallenauve, at the very hour when the bullets were flying, answered in these words:"

Here followed a few sentences from Sallenauve's speech, which I have already quoted. Then, in huge letters:

"THE EMEUTE HAS BEEN PUT DOWN: WHO WILL PROFIT BY IT?"

That little paper did marvels, and defeated the supreme efforts of Monsieur de Trailles, who, throwing off the mask altogether, passed his day haranguing in white gloves on the market-place and at the door of the electoral college. This evening the result was announced. Whole number voting, 201; Beauvisage had 2, Simon Giguet had 29, and Sallenauve 170. Consequently, Monsieur Charles de Sallenauve was PROCLAIMED DEPUTY.

PART THIRD

THE COMTE DE SALLENAUVE

THE COMTE DE SALLENAUVE

*

In the evening following the election in which he had played a rôle so humiliating to his self-esteem, Maxime de Trailles returned to Paris. Upon observing that he made a hasty toilet, and at once ordered his carriage, one might have thought that he proposed to call upon the Comte de Rastignac, Minister of Public Works, to make report of his mission, and explain its ill-success; but other and more urgent business seemed to demand his attention.

"To Colonel Franchessini's," he said to his coachman.

Stopping at the door of one of the most attractive mansions in the Breda Quarter, Monsieur de Trailles passed the concierge, nodding a good-day, and received from him the affirmative signal which means: "Monsieur is at home." At the same time a bell announced his presence to a servant, who came and opened the door of the peristyle.

"May I see the colonel?" he asked.

"He has just gone to madame's apartment. Does monsieur wish me to speak to him?"

"Never mind, I will wait for him in his study."

And like a habitué of the house, not requiring the servant's assistance in finding the way, he ushered himself into a large room with two windows, on the same level with a garden. The study was, like the Bologna lute, included in the famous inventory of the *Avare, supplied with all its strings, or nearly all;* in other words, all the articles that justified it in laying claim to its scholarly designation, such as the desk, bookcase, maps, and atlas, formed the nucleus of a very complete and sumptuous outfit; but, being a passionate sportsman, and one of the most active members of the Jockey Club, the colonel had allowed his smoking-room, his fencing-room, and his harness-room to overflow, little by little, into that sanctuary of toil and learning; so that pipes and weapons of every shape and every country, tomahawks included, saddles, hunting-crops, bits and stirrups of all patterns, fencing-gloves and boxing-gloves, made up a most curious and most unorthodox medley. However, by surrounding himself thus with the paraphernalia of his favorite occupations and *studies*, the colonel shows himself to be a man with the courage of his opinions. In truth, according to him, it is not possible to bestow continuous attention for more than a quarter of an hour upon reading of any sort, unless it be the *Journal des Haras*.

We must believe, however, that politics had found a way of insinuating itself into that existence, so exclusively devoted to the cult of muscular exercise and the equestrian science, for Maxime found on the floor a pile containing most of the morning newspapers, which the colonel had disdainfully cast aside after running his eye over them. From amid all that rubbish, Monsieur de Trailles picked out the *National*, and his eyes were at once saluted by the following paragraph on the front page:

"Our cause is assured of a brilliant triumph in the arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube. Despite all the efforts of local *officialdom*, combined with those of a special agent whom the ministry despatched to that threatened point, the election board was made up entirely in the interest of the candidate of the Advanced Left. We are able, therefore, to announce, *with assurance*, the election to-morrow of Monsieur Dorlange, one of our most distinguished sculptors, whom we warmly commended to the choice of the electors. Our readers will not be astonished to see the successful candidate proclaimed under the name of Monsieur Charles de Sallenauve, instead of that of Dorlange. By a duly authenticated document, executed on May 2, in the office of Maître Achille Pigoult, notary of Arcis, Monsieur Dorlange is authorized to assume the name of one of the best families of Champagne, to which he was not aware that he belonged; but, Dorlange or Sallenauve, the new deputy is one of us; and of that the ministry will very soon be assured from the tribune. After reading the eloquent sentences uttered by the candidate at the preliminary meeting, we can, without flattery and without party prejudice, predict for him a most noteworthy success in the parliamentary conflict."

Maxime angrily tossed the paper aside and picked up another sheet: it happened to be an organ of the legitimist faction; there he read, also under the heading ELECTIONS:

"The staff of the National Guard and the Jockey Club, both of which had several representatives in the last Chamber, have sent one of their most illustrious notabilities to the

Chamber which is about to open. Colonel Franchessini, so well known for the ardor he displays in the pursuit of rebellious National guardsmen, has been elected, almost unanimously, for one of the rotten boroughs of the Civil List. It is thought that he will take his seat with the phalanx of aides de camp, and that in the Chamber, as at staff-headquarters, he will show himself to be one of the most fervent and steadfast supporters of the policy of the present order of affairs."

As Maxime finished reading that article, the colonel came in.

After serving momentarily under the Empire, Colonel Franchessini had become one of the most brilliant colonels of the Restoration; but, as the result of some clouds that had cast a doubt upon the absolute scrupulosity of his character, he had been obliged to hand in his resignation, so that in 1830 he was admirably situated to devote himself with the utmost fervor to the cause of the dynasty of July. As he did not re-enter the service, however, having, a short time after his misadventure, been consoled therefor by an immensely rich Englishwoman who had allowed herself to be ensnared by his superb physique, at that time worthy of Antinous, and had made him her husband, Colonel Franchessini eventually resumed his epaulets as a member of the staff of the citizen militia. There he proved to be one of the most turbulent and fractious of swashbucklers, and, by virtue of the powerful connections which his wealth and that privileged position secured for him, he had, as the journal correctly stated, forced his way into the Chamber of Deputies

Although he was nearing fifty, like his friend Maxime de Trailles, Colonel Franchessini still had pretensions to youth, which his dry constitution and his active, military bearing seemed likely to eke out for many years. Although he had finally concluded to make the best of his grizzly hair, whose silvery reflection he was content to subdue by keeping it always cut very close, he was less resigned to the whitening of his moustache, which he wore jauntily curled at the ends, and tried to retain its original color by the use of a Hungarian cosmetic. But he who seeks to prove too much proves nothing, and in the dye that he used the artificial and the supernatural were betrayed by an intensity of color and a uniform shading too perfect not to be improbable. His face, which was very dark and most unmistakably stamped with the Italian origin indicated by his name, derived from his moustache an extraordinarily rigid expression, to which features that had become angular, a piercing glance and a long nose like that of a bird of prey, were far from affording the desirable tempering and corrective element.

"Well! Maxime," he said, shaking hands with the guest who awaited him, "where the devil do you come from? It's more than a fortnight since anybody has seen you at the club."

"Where do I come from?" replied Monsieur de Trailles; "I will tell you directly; but, first of all, let me congratulate you."

"Yes," said the colonel, carelessly, "it occurred to *them* to elect me! Faith! I give you my word that I am quite innocent of what has happened, and if no one had taken any more interest in it than I did—"

"But, my dear fellow, you are a golden selection for an arrondissement to make, and if the electors with whom I have had to do had only shown themselves half so intelligent!—"

"What! have you, toc, been running somewhere? Why, from what I know of the somewhat disturbed state of your finances, I should not have supposed you were in condition for that."

"Nor was I working on my own account; Rastignac was very anxious about the arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube, and he asked me to go down there for a few days."

"Arcis-sur-Aube! Why, my dear man, if I remember rightly an article that I read this morning in one of those rascally papers, they bid fair to make a detestable choice there; isn't that where they propose to send us a plasterer, a maker of poor images?"

"That's the place, and that outrage is just what I have come to talk about; I wanted to talk to you about it before anybody else. I arrived in Paris less than two hours ago, and I shall not see Rastignac until I leave you."

"The little minister is doing very well!" said the colonel, interrupting the chain of ideas by which Maxime, in every word he spoke, had adroitly sought to lead the conversation to the object of his visit; "they're very well pleased with him at the château. Do you know the little Nucingen whom he married?"

"Yes, I see a good deal of Rastignac; he's a very old acquaintance of mine."

"She's a pretty little thing," continued the colonel, "very pretty, and, now that the first year of marriage is dead and buried, I believe that a fellow who ventured on a charge in that direction might hope not to be too cruelly received."

"Come, come!" said Maxime, "a serious character like you, a legislator! Why, look at me: just from having stirred up the electoral puddle for somebody else's benefit, I have come back a staid old man."

"So you say you went to Arcis-sur-Aube to prevent the election of this stone-cutter?"

"Not at all; I went there to block a Left Centre candidate."

"Pah! I don't know that I wouldn't prefer a member of the pure Left. But take a cigar; I have some very good ones, the kind that princes smoke."

Maxime would have made nothing by refusing, for the colonel had already risen to ring for his valet, to whom he said simply:

"A light!"

When the cigars were lighted, Monsieur de Trailles forestalled another interruption, by declaring, before he was questioned on the subject, that he had never in his life smoked anything so exquisite. Comfortably ensconced in his easy-chair, and ballasted, so to speak, by the solace with which he had provided himself, the colonel seemed to promise a less fleeting attention. Thereupon Monsieur de Trailles resumed:

"At first everything went along as smoothly as possible. To run against the candidate the ministry was anxious about—an advocate, you know, the worst kind of pest—I unearthed an ex-hosier, mayor of the town, a ridiculous numskull, whom I persuaded to come forward. The good man was firmly convinced that he belonged, no less than his competitor, to the dynastic opposition. That is the trend of political opinion in that neighborhood, for the moment. The election was practically settled, through my efforts; but when our man was once in Paris, the great seducer at the Tuileries would have had to say no more than three words to him before he would have had his truculent opponent turned inside out like one of the cotton stockings he used to make, and then they could have done what they chose with him."

"That was a very well-played game," said the colonel, "I recognize my Maxime in that."

"You will recognize him even better when he tells you that he found his own little profit in the combination, without cheating his employers. In order to instil a little parliamentary ambition into this bumpkin, I had to turn my attention in the first place to his wife, a not unattractive provincial, although she is already on the downward track—"

"Ah! yes, very good," said Franchessini: "husband a deputy and—whatever you want."

"You haven't hit it, my dear fellow. There's an only daughter in the family, a spoiled child of nineteen, with a very agreeable face and something like a million for her dowry."

"Why, I passed your carriage-maker's and your tailor's last night, my dear Maxime, and I assure you that I noticed no illumination—"

"Unluckily it would have been a little premature. However that may be, there were the two women frantic with longing to emigrate to Paris; hence, gratitude beyond measure to the man who promised to escort them through the doorway of the Palais Bourbon; the little one, crazy over the title of countess, the mother transported with joy at the idea of having a political salon;—you see all the readily negotiable features of the situation, and you know me, I fancy, well enough to believe that I did not fail to grasp any of the possibilities which at once became manifest."

"I have no uneasiness about you," replied the colonel, rising and opening a window to give egress to some of the smoke with which the two cigars were beginning to fill the room.

"So," continued Maxime, "I was in a fair way to *cap* myself with the girl and her dowry, as soon as I had fully made up my mind to jump with my feet together into that mésalliance, when this gentleman with the double name, of whom the *National* speaks this morning, suddenly appeared in the province, dropping from the clouds, or, more properly speaking, coming up out of the earth."

"By the way," said the colonel, "what's all this about an authenticated document that allows you to assume a name you had never heard of the day before?"

"An acknowledgment of a natural child before a notary; that's perfectly legal."

"So this gentleman belongs to the interesting class of anonymous children. Well! well! those rascals are often born under a lucky star! I'm not surprised that this fellow cut the grass from under your feet."

"My dear fellow," rejoined Maxime, "if we were living in the Middle Ages, I would explain by means of magic and witchcraft the complete unhorsing of my candidate and the election of the man whom you are in danger of having for a colleague. Indeed, is it comprehensible that an old *tricoteuse*, one of Danton's friends, and to-day the superior of a convent of Ursulines, should be able, with the assistance of her nephew, an obscure organist in Paris, whom she sent for to be the visible agent of her intrigue, to bewitch an electoral college to such a point that this upstart succeeds in obtaining an imposing majority?"

"But he must have had some acquaintances in the province?"

"Not a shadow of one, unless it be that old bigot. Wealth, kindred, even a father, he had none of these down to the moment of his arrival! He hadn't taken his boots off before he was transformed into the proprietor of a considerable estate, God knows by what shrewd manœuvring! Following the same line of procedure, an alleged nobleman of the district, from which he claimed to have been absent for many years, presents himself with this schemer before a notary, acknowledges him on the gallop as his son, and disappears the following night without letting anybody know in what direction he has gone. The trick done, the Ursuline and her aide de camp put him forward as a candidate; thereupon, republicans, legitimists, conservatives, clergy, nobility, bourgeoisie, everybody, as if a spell had been cast upon the district, went over to this old *nun-fairy's* favorite; and, if it hadn't been for the anointed battalion of office-holders, who, being under my eye, kept to the ranks and did not disband, there was no reason why his election, like yours, shouldn't have been unanimous."

"In that case, my poor boy, good-by to the dowry!"

"Not exactly; but at all events it's all postponed. The father whines because the beatific placidity of his life has been disturbed, and because he has been overwhelmed with ridicule, when the poor man was so rich in that commodity before! The daughter still longs to be a countess, but the mother isn't reconciled to the shipwreck of her political salon, and God knows how far I shall have to carry consolation with her! Furthermore, I am handicapped by the necessity of finding a solution to my problem very soon; I believed that I had found it: I would marry, I would take a year to settle my affairs; then, at the end of the next session, I would make my worthy father-in-law resign, and myself fill his vacant seat in the Chamber; you see what a horizon opened before me!"

"But, my dear fellow, political horizons aside, you must not let that million escape you."

"*Mon Dieu!* I have no fears in that direction, over and above the delay. My friends will soon be in Paris. After the humiliation they have undergone, life in Arcis is unendurable to them. Beauvisage in particular—excuse the name, it is that of my adopted family—Beauvisage, like Coriolanus, is ready to deliver over his ungrateful country to fire and sword, if he knew how. Moreover, in transplanting themselves to the capital the ill-fated exiles know where to lay their heads, for they are to be proprietors of the Hôtel Beauséant, if you please."

"Proprietors of the Hôtel Beauséant!" cried the colonel, in blank amazement.

"Yes, to be sure: Beauséant, Beauvisage; it's a change of termination only. Ah! my dear fellow, you have no idea of these provincial fortunes, accumulated, sou by sou, especially when the talent for saving is combined with the never-ceasing avidity of the leech called commerce! We must make up our minds to it: the bourgeoisie is constantly rising higher and higher like a flood, and it is very affable on its part to buy our châteaux and our estates, instead of guillotining us, as in '93, in order to get them for nothing."

"But you have put your estates and your châteaux in good order, my dear Maxime!"

"You see that I have not, my friend, as I am at this moment intent upon reorganizing myself."

"The Hôtel Beauséant," said the colonel, reverting to a time long past, "I have not stepped foot in since the last ball given by the viscountess, its owner, on the very night when a disappointment in love made her determine to go and bury herself in one of her estates in Normandy.—See *Old Goriot.*—I was there with poor Lady Brandon, and we made a devil of a sensation; but I remember the magnificence of the apartments; it's a regal residence."

"Luckily everything has been overturned since then; the superb house was let to some English people for a long while, so that enormous repairs are necessary now. That is an excellent bond between myself and my provincials, for without me they wouldn't know where to begin; we have already agreed that I am to be general superintendent of the work, but I have made my mother-in-law that is to be another promise, and I need your assistance, my dear fellow, to enable me to keep it."

"You don't want me to ask for a tobacco agency, or a stamped-paper agency for her, do you?"

"No, it's something less difficult than that. These damned women, when they are inspired by hatred or the thirst for vengeance, display a truly marvellous instinct, and Madame Beauvisage, who roars like a bull at the mere mention of this Dorlange's name, has taken it into her head that some vile intrigue or other lurks under his incomprehensible success. It is certain that the appearance and disappearance of this *American* father are well calculated to suggest some very singular interpretations, and, very probably, if a strict watch should be kept on the organist, who was entrusted, they say, with the education of the interesting bastard, and is supposed also to have the whole secret of his birth, we might perhaps fall in with some most unforeseen revelations. In that connection I thought of a man with whom you have very great influence, I believe, and who could aid us materially in this *Dorlange hunt.* You remember that theft of jewels from Jenny Cadine, concerning which she exhibited such distress one evening at Véry's? You called for paper and ink, and, in response to a single line which you despatched to one Monsieur de Saint-Estève, at three o'clock in the morning, the police went to work to such good purpose that the thieves were captured and the jewels recovered before the next evening."

"Yes, I remember that," said the colonel; "my impertinence was very well timed; but let me tell you that if my blood had been a little cooler, I shouldn't have treated Monsieur de Saint-Estève so cavalierly. He's a man to be approached with more ceremony."

"Pshaw! isn't he an ex-convict, whose pardon you helped to obtain, and who has for you something of the veneration that Fieschi felt for one of his protectors?"

"That is true: Monsieur de Saint-Estève, like his predecessor, Bibi-Lupin, *has been unfortunate;* but he is to-day at the head of the secret police, his duties are exceedingly important, and he performs them with rare ability. If this were a matter directly connected with his department, I should not hesitate to give you a letter of introduction to him; but the matter of which you speak is a very delicate one, and it is necessary, first of all, for me to sound him, to find out if he will consent to talk with you about it."

"I thought that he was absolutely at your beck and call. Let us say no more about it if there's any difficulty."

"The greatest difficulty is that I never see him; naturally I can't write him on such a subject; I must wait for an opportunity therefore, a chance meeting. But why don't you mention it to Rastignac, who would give him orders to act?"

"You see, Rastignac will receive me very coolly; I assured him of a triumph in advance, and I have to report a defeat; he will look upon this expedient I have in mind as one of the empty dreams to which a man clings to cover up a defeat; in fact, for every reason, I should prefer to owe this service to your old friendship exclusively."

"Well, it shall not fail you," said the colonel, rising; "I will do my best to satisfy you; but I must have time."

The visit had lasted a long while. Maxime looked upon this as a hint to cut it short, and he took his leave, but with a shade of coolness in his manner to which the colonel paid little heed.

As soon as Monsieur de Trailles had gone, Franchessini took a knave of spades and cut the card oddly, in such a way as to leave the printed figure intact. He placed this species of hieroglyph between two pieces of thick paper, and put the whole in an envelope. On the outside of the envelope the colonel wrote this superscription in a disguised hand: *Monsieur de Saint-Estève, Petite Rue Sainte-Anne, near Quai des Orfèvres*.

That done, he rang, gave orders that his carriage, which he had ordered before Maxime's arrival, should be sent back to the stable, and, going out on foot, dropped his strange missive in the first letter-box that he passed. He was careful first to see if he had sealed it firmly.

As a result of the elections just concluded, the ministry, contrary to its expectation, retained a majority in the Chamber—a problematical and temporary majority, which promised it no more than a sickly, struggling existence. However, it had obtained the material success with which statesmen are content when they are determined to cling to power forever at any price. In the ministerial camp all hands were singing the *Te Deum* which serves as well to celebrate questionable defeats as unquestionable victories. During the evening of the day on which Colonel Franchessini had had the conversation we have recorded with Maxime de Trailles, the general result of the elections became known; so that the ministers on the left bank, who received that day, found their salons filled to overflowing;

and the crowd was especially large in the salon of the Minister of Public Works, the Comte de Rastignac. Although he was not, strictly speaking, an orator, that diminutive statesman, by virtue of his dexterity, his elegant manners, his marvellous resources, and above all his absolute devotion to the system of personal politics, was likely to play a rôle of first-rate importance in a cabinet destined to exist from hand to mouth.

Madame de l'Estorade, whose mind was too engrossed with her children to permit her to be very punctual in the performance of her social duties, had long owed Madame de Rastignac a call. She had not returned the visit she received from the minister's wife on the evening when the sculptor, now a deputy, had been invited to dine with her, in acknowledgment of the famous statuette—an occasion heretofore described to Madame Octave de Camps. Monsieur de l'Estorade, a zealous conservative, as we know, had insisted that his wife should pay her debt, already of long standing, on an occasion when it would subserve the ends of courtesy and politics as well. Having arrived early, in order to be the sooner relieved from her penance, Madame de l'Estorade found herself at the upper end of the circle formed by the ladies, who were seated, while the men stood about talking. Her chair was beside Madame de Rastignac, who was seated next to the fireplace; in official salons that is a sort of sign for the benefit of new arrivals, who know exactly where to go to salute the hostess. In hoping to make her call a brief one, Madame de l'Estorade had not taken into account the extended conversations into which her husband was likely to be drawn on such a day. Monsieur de l'Estorade was an influential member of the Chamber of Peers rather than an orator, but he was considered an extremely farsighted and judicious person, and so, at every step that he took on his way through the salons, he was stopped, now by a political notability, now by a financial or diplomatic notability or a notable man of business, and urged with interest to give his impression concerning the future of the session that was about to begin. To all these interpellations the president of the Cour des Comptes replied with a more or less extended statement of his views, and at times he had the pleasure of finding himself the centre of a group, where his observations were listened to with marked attention. This success made him very inattentive to the urgent telegraphing of his wife, who kept her eye on him through all his evolutions, and, whenever he was within reach of her glance, made him a signal to indicate her wish to put an end to the session. The slight heed that he seemed to pay to her impatience is a phenomenon worthy of notice in that conjugal sky, usually so cloudless and serene. Ten years after their marriage, Monsieur de l'Estorade, who had been accepted by his wife with a sentiment far removed from enthusiasm, would have been horrified at the thought of such pronounced disinclination to obey, but three full lustres had passed since, by accomplishing miracles of resignation, he had won the hand of the fair Renée de Maucombe, and although she had as yet lost nothing of her splendid beauty, he, on the other hand, had aged considerably. The twenty years' difference between his fifty-two years and Madame de l'Estorade's thirty-two was beginning to be all the more noticeable because, even at thirty-seven, when they joined their destinies, his hair was turning gray and his health was ruined. An affection of the liver which was just beginning to make itself apparent then, had lately given signs of renewed activity after sleeping for a number of years; and, while this morbid tendency, to which statesmen and ambitious men are peculiarly subject, not unnaturally developed in him a more marked taste for political questions, it made him, if we may venture to use the expression, less sensitive to the pressure of the conjugal bit. It may be that that absurd attack of jealousy, to which we once saw him give way, had no other cause than the dull pain in the diseased organ, which was already spreading over his worn features the yellow hue of chronic inflammation of the liver. Monsieur de l'Estorade talked so much and so well, that the salons finally became empty, and only a small circle, composed entirely of intimate friends, remained, grouped around his wife and Madame de Rastignac. As he walked to the door with the last of those visitors who were of sufficient importance to merit that attention, the minister caught up as he passed, and carried with him the president of the Cour des Comptes, whom he found in what he considered the dangerous grasp of a species of Wurtemberg baron, the secret agent of one of the Northern powers, who, with the aid of his broken language and his decorations, could always extort a little more information concerning the object of ministerial manœuvres than his interlocutor intended to divulge. Taking the artless Monsieur de l'Estorade familiarly by the arm, as he was listening complacently to the insidious trans-Rhine tirades in which the chestnut-colored diplomatist took care to wrap the curiosity which he dared not exhibit without a cloak:

"That man is nobody at all, you know," said Rastignac, after the stranger had bestowed a most humble and obsequious salute upon him.

"He does not talk badly, however," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "and if it weren't for his infernal accent—"

"On the contrary," rejoined the minister, "his accent is his strength, like Nucingen's my father-in-law. These Germans, with their way of murdering French and always seeming to be soaring among the clouds, are the cleverest of all pilferers of secrets."

When they had joined the group that surrounded his wife, Rastignac, who still retained the husband's arm, said:

"I bring back Monsieur de l'Estorade to you, madame; I have just caught him in criminal conversation with a statesman of the Zollverein, who probably would not have restored him to you before morning, but for me."

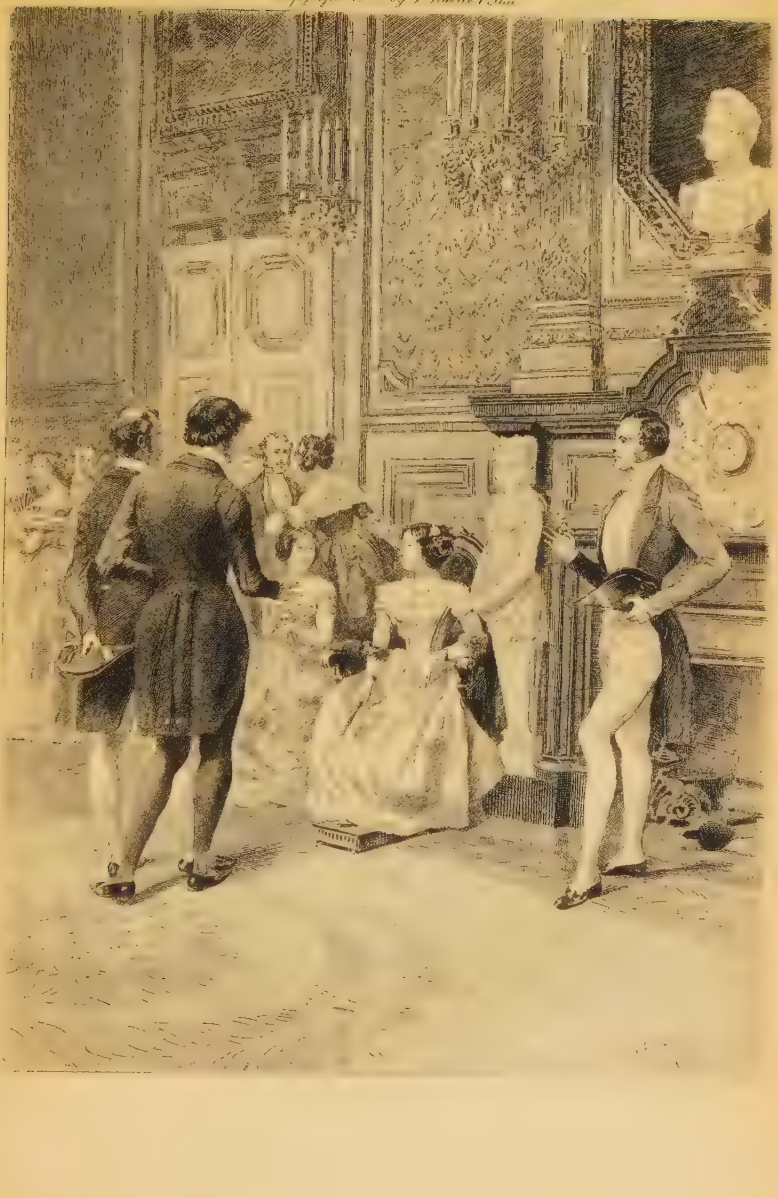
"Why, I was just thinking of asking Madame de

THE RASTIGNAC SALON

Rastignac, who still retained the husband's arm, said:

"I bring back Monsieur de l'Estorade to you, madame; I have just caught him in criminal conversation with a statesman of the Zollverein, who probably would not have restored him to you before morning, but for me."

Copyright 1898 by G. Barrie & Son



Rastignac for a bed, in order to restore her her liberty, which Monsieur de l'Estorade's interminable conversations have prevented my doing all the evening."

Madame de Rastignac protested that, on the contrary, it had given her very great pleasure to have the privilege of sitting by Madame de l'Estorade as long as possible, and that her only regret was that she had often been obliged to interrupt their conversation in order to receive the homage of those strange spectres of newly blossomed deputies, who had come in relays to pay their respects to her.

"Oh! my dear love," cried Rastignac, "the session is just about to open: I beg you, let us have none of these scornful airs for the chosen representatives of the nation! Otherwise you will have trouble with madame; she is a warm patroness of one of these sovereigns of recent date, so I am told."

"I?" said Madame de l'Estorade, with an air of amazement, but blushing slightly.

Her complexion, which was still brilliant in its freshness of coloring, made her particularly prone to that facial affection.

"Ah! why, that is true," said Madame de Rastignac: "I had forgotten all about that artist who, on the last occasion that I had the pleasure of seeing you at your own house, was cutting out those fascinating silhouettes for your children in a corner of the salon. I confess that I was very far from suspecting then that he was destined to be one of our masters."

"Even at that time," replied Madame de l'Estorade, "his candidacy had been mentioned, but, to be sure, it was spoken of rather slightingly then."

"Not by me!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade quickly, scenting an opportunity to add another stripe to his reputation as a clever prophet. "After the first conversation on politics that I ever had with this new-comer, I declared — and Monsieur de Ronquerolles is here to bear me out in what I say — I declared that I was amazed at the ability he manifested."

"Most certainly," replied the person appealed to, "he is no ordinary youth, but I do not believe in his future; he's a man of first impulses, and, as Monsieur de Talleyrand well said, the first impulse is always the best."

"Well, monsieur?" said Madame de l'Estorade ingenuously.

"Well, madame," replied Monsieur de Ronquerolles, who plumed himself greatly on his scepticism, "heroism is not of our day; it is a horribly heavy and embarrassing burden under which one gets mired on the road."

"I should have supposed, however, that noble qualities of mind and heart counted for something in the make-up of a distinguished man."

"Qualities of mind—yes, you are right, but only on the condition that they are bent in a certain direction; but qualities of the heart—what purpose can they serve in politics? to raise you on stilts on which you walk less easily than on the ground, and from which you fall at the first push and break your neck."

"On that theory," laughed Madame de Rastignac, while Madame de l'Estorade held her peace, not deigning to reply, "the political world is peopled entirely with good-for-naughts, is it?"

"Why, somewhat so, madame; ask *Lazarille!*"

As he made this allusion to a jest that is still celebrated in stage annals, Monsieur de Ronquerolles laid his hand familiarly on the minister's shoulder.

"It seems to me, my dear fellow," said Rastignac, "that your generalities are a little too specific."

"No, but come, let us speak seriously," rejoined Monsieur de Ronquerolles. "To my knowledge this Monsieur de Sallenauve—that, I believe, is the name for which he has exchanged his former name of Dorlange, which he himself jocosely called a comedy name—performed two very meritorious actions within a very short time. On one occasion, when I was present and abetting, he came very near getting himself killed by the Duc de Rhétoré, on account of a few ill-sounding words concerning a friend of his. In the first place, he might have pretended not to hear them; and it is a question whether, having heard them, it was, I will not say his duty, but his right to take them up."

"Ah!" said Madame de Rastignac, "was it he who fought that duel with Monsieur de Rhétoré that made so much talk?"

"Yes, madame, and I must say—and I know

what I am talking about—that in that meeting he behaved with consummate gallantry."

Before the story of the *other* meritorious action could be told, Madame de l'Estorade, at the risk of subjecting herself to the charge of discourtesy by cutting in halves an argument that had been begun, rose and made an almost imperceptible sign to her husband that she wished to go. Monsieur de l'Estorade took advantage of the feebleness of the demonstration to pretend not to understand it and to remain where he was. Monsieur de Ronquerolles continued:

"His other fine action was throwing himself under the feet of runaway horses, to rescue madame's daughter from imminent danger of death."

All eyes were turned upon Madame de l'Estorade, who blushed in good earnest this time; but at the same time, if for no other purpose than to satisfy the imperative necessity of keeping herself in countenance, she said, with emotion:

"It is fair to presume, monsieur, that you mean to imply that Monsieur de Sallenauve was a great idiot on that occasion, for he risked his life, and so he would have put an end to all his hopes of future triumph; I must tell you, however, that there is one woman whom you will have some difficulty in bringing over to your opinion, and that woman, if I must name her, is my child's mother."

As she finished, Madame de l'Estorade almost had tears in her voice; she pressed Madame de Rastignac's hand affectionately, and moved toward the door with such an imperative air, that she effected the dislodgment of her fixture of a husband.

"I thank you for having broken a lance with that cynic," said Madame de Rastignac, as she walked with her to the door of the salon; "Monsieur de Rastignac has retained some very undesirable acquaintances of his past life!"

"Ha! ha! these rescuers!" Monsieur de Ronquerolles was saying, as she returned to her place: "it's a fact that poor L'Estorade is turning as yellow as a lemon!"

"Oh! this is horrible, monsieur!" said Madame de Rastignac, with animation; "a woman whom slander has never tried to assail, who lives only for her husband and children, and whose eyes fill with tears at the recollection of the danger incurred by one of them a long while ago!"

"*Mon Dieu*, madame," retorted Monsieur de Ronquerolles, without pausing to consider the bearing of his words, "all that I can say is that newly-made land is a dangerous and unhealthy sort. After all, Madame de l'Estorade, if she should be too deeply compromised, would always have one resource: to give him for a wife the little girl whose life he saved."

Monsieur de Ronquerolles had no sooner uttered the words than he realized the ghastly blunder of which he had been guilty in speaking in that way in the salon of Mademoiselle de Nucingen. He blushed profusely in his turn, although he was little accustomed to do it, and a vast silence, in which he felt as if he were enveloped, put the finishing touch to his confusion.

"That clock must be slow!" said the minister, for the sake of saying something, and to put an end to a festivity at which every word had caused some unpleasant misunderstanding.

"True," said Monsieur de Ronquerolles, after looking at his watch which pointed to half-past eleven, "it will soon be quarter to twelve."

He bowed ceremoniously to Madame de Rastignac and went out with the last of the guests.

"You saw his embarrassment," said Rastignac to his wife, as soon as they were alone; "he was a thousand leagues from saying it with any malicious purpose."

"It doesn't matter. As I was saying just now to Madame de l'Estorade, your life as a young man has left you with some most detestable connections."

"Why, my dear girl, every day the king smiles pleasantly upon people whom he would shut up in the Bastille with all his heart, if there were still a Bastille and the charter would permit him."

Madame de Rastignac made no reply, and went up to her bedroom without bidding her husband good-night.

Shortly after, the minister presented himself at a door which was not the official door, and, finding no key therein, called: "Augusta!" in the voice that the humblest bourgeois on Rue Saint-Denis would have used under similar circumstances.

The only reply he heard was the hasty throwing of a bolt.

"Aha!" he said to himself, with an indignant gesture, "there are past lives which do not resemble that door, but are always open to the present."

After a moment's silence, he said, to cover his retreat:

"I wanted to ask you, Augusta, at what time I am likely to find Madame de l'Estorade at home. I intend to go and call on her to-morrow, after what happened to-night."

"At four o'clock," the young wife called through the door, "when she returns from the Tuileries, where she takes her children to walk every day."

One of the questions that had been most frequently asked in Parisian society since Madame de Rastignac's marriage was this: "Does Madame de Rastignac love her husband?" The doubt was a justifiable one, Mademoiselle de Nucingen's marriage being the unattractive and immoral fruit of one of those culpable liaisons which find their outlet conjugally in the life of the daughter, after they have been prolonged in the life of the mother until the time when years and satiety, already of long standing, have brought them to a condition of complete atrophy and paralysis. Almost always the husband assents with good grace to these marriages *de convenance*, in which the transports of love are supposed to be transferred to the second generation, for he escapes from a pleasure which has grown stale, and takes advantage of a speculation similar to that proposed by the magician in the *Thousand and One Nights,* who went about the street offering to exchange his new lamps for old ones. But the woman who submits to such an arrangement which has an entirely different complexion, so far as she is concerned; who must always be conscious of a living memory between her and her husband—which may revive; who, even outside the empire of the senses, has the consciousness of a former domination antagonistic to her young influence; the woman is almost always a victim, is she not, and can one believe in a very passionate eagerness on her part for the added cares of maternity? Rastignac waited at the door almost as long a time as we have employed in writing this brief analysis of a not uncommon conjugal situation.

"Well, good-night, Augusta!" he said, concluding to retire.

As he uttered those farewell words in a piteous tone, the door suddenly flew open and his wife threw herself into his arms and stood with her head resting against his shoulder, sobbing bitterly. Thus the question was solved: Madame de Rastignac loved her husband; but one heard none the less the rumbling of a pretty little hell beneath the flowers of that paradise."

*

The next morning Rastignac was less early than usual, and when he entered his office the anteroom adjoining already contained eleven petitioners who were awaiting him with letters of audience, in addition to two peers of France and seven deputies. As the bell rang sharply, the usher, with an agitation that communicated itself to those who were waiting, rushed hastily into the sanctuary; a moment later he came out again, armed with this stereotyped phrase:

"The minister is obliged to attend a meeting of the Council. He will have the honor, however, to receive the members of the two Chambers; as for the other gentlemen, they may call at another time."

"But what other time?" demanded one of the slighted ones, angrily; "this makes three times within three days that I have come here for nothing."

The usher made a gesture which said: "It's none of my business, I am carrying out my orders." But, as he heard some muttering concerning the privilege accorded the honorable legislators, he said, with much solemnity:

"The honorable peers and deputies have come to discuss matters of general interest with monsieur le ministre."

The suitors being put off with that pretence, the bell rang again. Thereupon the usher assumed his most gracious expression. The fortunate individuals had, by natural affinity, formed a group in one corner; although some of them had never seen one another, for several were the offspring of the last national lying-in, they could readily recognize one another by a certain representative air very difficult to describe, but which no one can mistake. It was in their direction that the usher turned his wheedling glance; not venturing to decide among so many eminent personages, he put this question to them without speaking: "Whom shall I have the honor to announce first?"

"Messieurs," said Colonel Franchessini, "I believe that I saw you all come in."

And he walked toward the folding-doors, which the usher made haste to throw open, saying, in a loud, clear voice:

"Monsieur le Colonel Franchessini."

"Ah! I am highly favored this morning," said the minister, taking a few steps toward the colonel and giving him his hand. "What have you come to ask for, my dear fellow? a railroad, a canal, a suspension-bridge?"

"I have come, my gracious minister, to talk with you about a private matter, something that concerns us, you and me."

"That is hardly a very adroit way of stating the case, for I warn you that my own business is a very poor recommendation to my attention."

"You have had a visitor recently?" asked the colonel, going at once to the point.

"A visitor? I have had a great many, I have them all the time."

"Yes, but during the evening of Sunday, the 12th, the day of the *émeute*."

"Ah! I remember," said Rastignac. "Why, that man is going mad!"

"Do you think so?" said the colonel, incredulously.

"*Dame*, what would you have me think of a sort of fanatic who steals in here under favor of the relaxed discipline that is always caused in ministerial establishments by a discharge of musketry in Paris; who tells me that the government is being undermined to a dangerous depth by the republican party, at the very moment when I had received assurances from the headquarters of the National Guard that we hadn't even an affray to deal with; and, lastly, who introduces himself as the only man by whom the future of the dynasty can be made secure?"

"So that you received him ungraciously?"

"That is to say, I finally showed him the door with some heat as the result of his persistence. To tell the truth, it was a visit which could but be unpleasant to me, in every way; but when, after I had reminded him that he occupied a position for which he was eminently fitted, the duties of which he performed with remarkable ability, and which should be the extreme limit of his ambition, the maniac replied that France would plunge headlong over a precipice unless his services were accepted,—then, you understand, there was but one thing for me to say to him, and that was that we had strong hopes of saving France without him."

"Well, that can't be undone!" said the colonel. "Now, if you will allow me to enter into some explanation—"

The minister, who was sitting at his desk with his back to the fireplace, turned his head to look at the clock.

"Look you, my dear fellow," he said, after he had seen what time it was, "I suspect that you will be long-winded, and I have a thirsty pack waiting out yonder; even if I gave you a long time, I should be a bad listener; do me the favor to go out and take a walk until noon and return at lunch-time; I will present you to Madame de Rastignac, whom you do not know, I believe, and when we leave the table we will take a turn or two around the garden; then I shall be entirely at your service, and for as long a time as is necessary."

"That arrangement is satisfactory to me," said the colonel, rising.

"I have not been very long, messieurs, I think!" he said, as he passed through the reception-room; and, having distributed two or three grasps of the hand, he went out.

Three hours later, when the colonel entered the salon, where he was presented to Madame de Rastignac, he found there Nucingen, the minister's father-in-law, who came to breakfast with his son-in-law almost every morning before going to the Bourse, Emile Blondet of the *Débats*, Messieurs

Moreau,—de l'Oise,—Dionis, and Camusot, three deputies who were *ferocious* conservatives, and two newly-elected men whose names it could not safely be asserted that Rastignac himself knew. Franchessini also recognized Martial de la Roche-Hugon, the minister's brother-in-law, and the inevitable Des Lupeaulx, peer of France; as for a third figure, who talked for a long while with the minister in a window-recess, the colonel was obliged to have recourse to Emile Blondet to learn that he was an ex-functionary of the secret police, who continued his former trade as an amateur, and paid a visit every morning to each minister, under all ministries, with as much zeal and regularity as if he still had duties to perform. After the somewhat audacious suggestion that the colonel had made to Maxime de Trailles, touching Madame de Rastignac's inclinations when her husband had aged a little, he was likely to pay some attention to the fourteenth and last guest, a fresh, rosy-cheeked young man, who was said to be the minister's private secretary. Everybody knows that these private secretaries, especially young men chosen with a view to securing unquestioning and zealous services, have sometimes replaced the late aides de camp. But as soon as he heard Madame de Rastignac use the familiar form of address to the young man and talk to him about his mother, Madame de Restaud, he paid no further heed to him: it was evidently some distant cousin, a by no means dangerous rival, whatever the comedies may say, when one is paying court to a young wife who has any sense of dignity. Monsieur de Rastignac had taken for his private secretary Félix Restaud, the second son of his mother-in-law, Madame de Nucingen's sister; Ernest, the oldest son, was, on the contrary, a warm adherent of the legitimist party, through his marriage with Camille de Grandlieu, daughter of the viscountess, who must not be confused with the duchess of the same name.

Seen near at hand, Madame de Rastignac seemed to the colonel not to belong to the languorous type of blondes. She bore a striking resemblance to her mother, but with the more marked shade of distinction, which the descendants of parvenus acquire from generation to generation as they recede from the parent stock. Almost the last drop of the *primitive Goriot* had evaporated, so to speak, from the veins of that lovely young woman, who was particularly remarkable for the delicate formation of the extremities, which denotes race, and the absence of which from Madame de Nucingen's charms had always betrayed, with such lamentable certainty, the vermicelli-maker's daughter. With the manner of a man who might have projects of his own later, the colonel exhibited toward Madame de Rastignac a restrained ardor, and at the same time that gallantry, now somewhat out of date, which gives the impression of being addressed to *the* woman rather than to *a* woman; amid the brutality of our constitutional manners, idlers, and more especially military men, alone retain a sort of reflection of that tradition. The colonel, who had had much boudoir success, knew that this method of beginning to prepare his approaches a long distance away from a besieged place is an excellent one strategically. A show of devotion and adoration is never displeasing to a woman, although the custom of making such a show has gone by; and if we except a few women who are followers of Voltaire in the matter of love, and, looking upon that sentiment as simple good-fellowship, are disposed to laugh at the respect which prevents a man from accosting them with a cigar in his mouth, so to speak, almost all women are grateful to a man, provided he does not play the Celadon, for treating them with pious veneration and something after the manner of consecrated relics.

As he wished to come to the house again, the colonel was careful to speak of his wife. "She lived," he said, "much after the old English fashion, in her own home; but he should be very happy to induce her to lay aside her tendency to seclusion in order to present her to so distinguished a woman as Madame de Rastignac, assuming that it would be agreeable to the latter. Notwithstanding the great difference in age between his wife and his friend the minister's, he had discovered one point at which they touched, namely, their ardor in charitable work." Indeed, Franchessini had hardly entered the house before he was obliged to purchase from Madame de Rastignac a ticket to a ball of which she was one of the patronesses, and which was to be given for the benefit of the *victims of the recent earthquake at Martinique*. It was the fashion among women, in those days, to exhibit an effrontery in good deeds which passed all bounds: now, it happened that Madame Franchessini was an Irish woman, a devout creature, who devoted to charitable objects the greater part of the time not employed in keeping her house in order, and a very large proportion of the funds of which she retained the right to dispose, free from the sovereign control of her husband. To offer the bait of an intimacy with a woman who, in all questions of crèches, shelters, and cholera orphans, would be so willing to contribute money and personal effort, was very shrewd diplomacy, therefore, and we can see that devotion to *sport* had not destroyed all the colonel's keen foresight.

When the breakfast was at an end, and the guests had dispersed or returned to the salon, Franchessini, who had sat at Madame de Rastignac's right at table, continued his chat with her. While, emulating Hercules at the feet of Omphale, he scrutinized with the greatest interest a piece of embroidery which the countess was making with her own fair hands, always for the benefit of the poor, the minister, in deference to the proverb: "Honor to whom honor is due," took the arm of Emile Blondet of the *Débats*, and walked with him twice up and down the lawn in front of the salon windows. Then he left him with this parting injunction :

"You understand? we don't want to declare the bargain off ; but still we have a majority.—Now, I am at your service, my master," he said to the colonel, and they walked into the garden.

"Being less fortunate than you," said Franchessini, taking up the conversation where he had left it some hours earlier, "I have maintained, I will not say constant relations with the man, but a sort of straggling intermittent connection with him. In order to avoid receiving him at my house, I have agreed with him that, when he has anything to say to me, he is to write to me without signing the letter, and make an appointment with me at some place. If the impossible should happen, and I should have occasion myself to seek an interview, I send a figure cut from a card to his lair on Rue Sainte-Anne; and he indicates a place where we can talk safely. I can trust his skill to choose a suitable retreat, as no one knows his Paris and the methods of subterranean travelling better than he."

"High-toned diplomacy!" said Rastignac, with a suggestion of sarcasm.

"I tell you everything, you see," rejoined the colonel, "in order to prove to you that, in my judgment, that man is to be handled with care, and so that you may not think that I am dangling spectres before your eyes with a view of inducing you to do something that you did not originally intend."

"Go on," said Rastignac, stopping to pluck a full-blown Bengal rose; it was done perhaps by way of demonstrating his absolute peace of mind.

"During the evening of the same day on which you accorded him such a frigid reception," continued the colonel, "my election to the Chamber being already known by telegraph and announced in the evening paper, I received a note from him—something that had not happened for eighteen months—a very brief note and to the point: *To-morrow morning, six o'clock, Clignancourt redoubt.*"

"A sort of challenge," observed Rastignac.

"It was at all events a reminder; for it was at Montmartre, you remember, that young Taillefer fell—by my hands—in that wretched duel—about 1820."—See *Old Goriot.*—"Sometimes, about dusk, I think of the poor devil, although the thrust was given fairly, as you know."

"One of those unpleasant incidents," said Rastignac, "that prevent a man from regretting his youthful days, during which they took place."

"The man you have styled a fanatic," resumed Franchessini, "was sitting on a knoll when I arrived, with his head in his hands. As soon as he heard me beside him, he became greatly excited, took my hand, led me to the very spot—it has changed hardly at all—where the duel took place, and demanded, in the startling voice that you have heard: 'What did you do there, twenty-five years ago?'—'Something for which I am very sorry, on my word.'—'So am I, and for whom?'—As I did not answer, he went on: 'For a man whose fortune I wanted to make; you killed the brother so that the sister should become a wealthy heiress and the other might marry her'—"

"But all that was done without my consent," interrupted Rastignac, hastily, "and I did everything that I possibly could to prevent it."

"That is what I remarked to him," continued the colonel; "but he, paying no heed to the suggestion, became still more excited, and exclaimed: 'And when I go to that man, not to ask a favor but to offer him my services, he turns me out-of-doors; and he thinks that it will rest so!'"

"He is very sensitive," said Rastignac, coolly; "I didn't turn him out-of-doors; I simply cut short his boasting and his extravagant talk a little abruptly."

"Thereupon," continued the colonel, "he told me of the interview he had had with you the night before; the offer he had made you to exchange his functions as an official of the judicial police, for the duty of spying upon political malefactors, which in his view is more useful: 'I am tired,' he said to me, 'of laying traps for thieves; they're such stupid game that all their tricks are like an open book to me. How intensely interesting it is, too, to hunt people who steal a silver thimble or a few bank-notes, when others are all prepared to hide the crown and filch the monarchy at the first chance!'"

"True," replied Rastignac, with a smile, "if it weren't for the National Guard, the army, the Chambers, and a king who knows how to ride!"

"He added," pursued Franchessini, "that you didn't understand him, that you *tired him out* with remarks that were pure nonsense; that he knew his own worth, that he is possessed of eminent qualities calculated to manifest themselves in a more exalted sphere; that he had even schooled someone to take his present place; and, lastly, that I must see you, because, being a deputy now, I had a right to be heard and could make you understand the possible consequence of your refusal."

"My dear fellow," rejoined Rastignac, warmly, "I will tell you again, as I told you at the beginning of this conversation, he's a madman, and madmen never frighten me, neither the cheerful nor the rabid kind."

"I confess that I myself saw many objections to his proposition. Trying to calm him, however, I promised to see you for him, simply impressing upon him that it was a matter which did not need to be rushed through; and it is a fact that I might not have mentioned the subject to you for a long time to come, were it not that something has happened."

"And that something?" queried the minister.

"Maxime called on me yesterday morning, on his return from Arcis-sur-Aube."

"I know," Rastignac interrupted him; "he mentioned that idea of his to me, but there's no sense in it. Either the man upon whom he wants to set your bull-dog is of some account, or he is not. If he is not, it is perfectly absurd to employ a dangerous and suspicious instrument to neutralize something that does not exist. If, on the other hand, we have to do with an orator, he has, first in the tribune and secondly in the newspapers, all that he needs not only to parry the secret thrusts we may aim at him but to turn them against us. This is the general rule: in a country of unbridled publicity like ours, wherever the hand of the police appears, even though it be to unveil the most shameful of crimes, it is certain that public opinion will start a hue and cry against the government. It is like the man before whom someone sang an air by Mozart to prove that Mozart was a great musician. 'It is possible that Mozart's a great musician,' he said at last, vanquished by the evidence: 'but you can flatter yourself, my dear fellow, that you have a horrible cold!'"

"*Mon Dieu!*" rejoined Franchessini, "there's a good deal of truth in what you say; but the man Maxime wanted to unmask may be only an honest mediocrity, who, although incapable of defending himself as effectively as you imagine, may nevertheless annoy you a great deal; your most dangerous adversaries aren't all giants of speech."

"The real value of your new colleague, I hope to know very soon," replied Rastignac, "from a source upon which I can depend, I think, for more certain information than from Monsieur de Trailles. On this occasion he has allowed the wool to be pulled over his eyes, and he is trying to make up by passion what he lacked in adroitness. As for your nightmare, whom I would not, in any event, employ in this dream of Maxime's,—as it would seem to be well to make him some answer, from the special point of view of your relations with him at least, I would say to him—"

"Well?" said Franchessini, with redoubled attention.

"Well, I would say to him that, aside from his criminal record, which, as soon as he made his appearance in the political breach, would expose him to atrocious abuse which would inevitably rebound upon us, he has certain deplorable memories in his life—"

"Memories only," rejoined Franchessini; "you must know that he would not make his appearance before you except with an entirely new skin."

"I know all about him," replied Rastignac; "you cannot suppose that he's the only man in Paris who does police duty. I made inquiries after his call, and I learned that, since 1830, when he was placed at the head of the secret police, he has led a genuine bourgeois life, as to which I should have but one reproach to make, that he disguised it too much."

"But—" the colonel began.

"He is rich," continued Rastignac; "he has a salary of twelve thousand francs and the three hundred thousand francs bequeathed him by Lucien de Rubempré, in addition to the profits of a patent-leather factory, which he has started out toward Gentilly, and which pays him handsomely. His aunt, Jacqueline Collin, with whom he keeps house, still gives her attention to matters that are rather unsavory, in which she necessarily picks up very handsome fees, and I have strong reasons for believing that both of them have gambled on the Bourse, and have been lucky. What the devil! with all that, my dear fellow, a man is whitewashed and purged of his contumacy. In the age in which we live, luxurious living is a power, a man wins neither consideration nor respect thereby, I agree, but he saves appearances, which is much the same thing. Just take certain statesmen or financiers whom I could name to you, out of their carriages and put them in a garret: why, the riffraff would run after them in the streets, and treat them like drunken men or Turks in the carnival! Very well, your man, who would need to place his life on a pedestal, in order not to be trampled in the mud, could think of nothing better to do than to veer suddenly around to the opposite pole. Every evening, in a café near the prefecture, below Pont Saint-Michel, he plays his game of dominoes, like an honest bourgeois, and, on Sunday, he goes philosophically, with a party of retired petty tradesmen, to pass the day at a cabin he has bought not far from Romainville forest, in the Saint-Gervais meadows; there he hunts for blue dahlias, and he talked last year of awarding the rose to the village maiden who won it by good conduct! All that business, my dear colonel, is too bucolic to lead to the control of the political police. Let this virtuous *Germeuil* bestir himself a little! let him throw money around, let him give dinner-parties! Even the headsman would have guests at dinner, if the fancy seized him!"

"I agree with you," said Franchessini. "I think that he keeps altogether too much to himself for fear of attracting attention."

"Let him show himself, on the other hand, and, as he is anxious to take a hand in public affairs, let him find some honest method of getting himself talked about. Does he think that the press won't hunt him out, no matter what corner he hides in? Let him do as the negroes do: they don't try to make themselves white; but they have a passion for bright colors, they wear red coats with gold thread on all the seams. If I were in his place, I know how I would go to work: in order to cleanse myself thoroughly, I would find some actress, very notorious, very prominent, very much in the public eye. I don't say that I would ruin myself, but I would make a show of ruining myself for her, thus causing people to think that I was possessed by one of the frantic passions to which the public is always indulgent, even when it shows no sympathy for them. I would display all my magnificence for the benefit of my idol; I would not entertain at my house, but at hers. Thanks to my mistress, I would compel people to tolerate my presence at my own table, and I would gradually form connections among my guests. All the people who speak with authority in our social circle inevitably flutter around a renowned actress like moths around a candle, and they can make, unmake, and remake a reputation—which latter is the climax of art. Politicians, financiers, newspaper men, artists, men of letters—I would harness them all together to pull me out of the mud-hole, giving them plenty to drink and being always ready to render them countless little services with my heart, and especially with my purse. Of course a man doesn't become a Saint Vincent de Paul in that way, my dear fellow, although he had been at the galleys too, but he may win a place among illustrious men of the third or fourth order, and make himself a possibility. I do not say that Monsieur de Saint-Estève may not fail, even after following this course, and then, if he should come to me again and I were still in power, I might listen to him."

"There is certainly something in that plan," said Franchessini. But he said to himself that, since the days at the Vauquer boarding-house, his friend the minister had travelled far, and that he and the quondam Vautrin seemed to have exchanged rôles.

"However," Rastignac added, as they ascended the steps to the salon, "be sure and make him understand that he placed a wrong construction on my manner of receiving him ; that I was naturally very much preoccupied that evening."

"Never fear," replied Franchessini, "I will say all that is necessary, because, I tell you again, he is not a man to be driven to extremities ; there are such things in life as old ties which will still have existed, whatever one may do."

As the minister made no reply to that remark, was not his silence a sufficient admission that he realized its truth?

"Will you be here for the royal session? we must have a little enthusiasm," said Rastignac to the colonel.

The latter, before taking his leave, asked Madame de Rastignac on what day he might have the honor of presenting his wife to her.

"Oh ! any day," Augusta replied, "and Fridays particularly."

*

At the hour when Rastignac, in accordance with the information given him by his wife, believed that he was certain to find Madame de l'Estorade at home, he did not fail to call. Like all those who were present at the scene caused by Monsieur de Ronquerolles's paradox, the minister had been struck by the emotion manifested by the countess, and although he did not concern himself with the nature or depth of the feeling she might entertain for her daughter's rescuer, he was satisfied that she felt a lively interest in him, at least. Sallenauve caused the ministry much vexation of spirit because of the surprise caused by his election and the *tour de force* by which it had been brought about, especially as his candidacy had not been taken at all seriously when first proposed. It was known that, at the preliminary meeting preceding the election, he had given proof of talent. He might become an eloquent and influential mouthpiece of a restless, dangerous party which had only an infinitesimal number of representatives in the Chamber. By virtue of his financial position, whatever the source of his wealth, he was so situated as to care nothing for favors from the government, and all the information obtainable concerning him indicated that it was very difficult to turn him aside from the path he had chosen, because of his gravity of character and morals. On the other hand, the mist that hovered over his life might, at any moment, serve to neutralize his influence, and, while pretending to repudiate with much heat the idea of attacking him on that side, Rastignac, in his own mind, did not renounce a method which presented no other obstacle than that it was difficult to handle; he did not intend to resort to it until the necessity for so doing should become apparent. In that condition of affairs, Madame de l'Estorade might serve two purposes: it seemed that it would be easy to arrange through her an *accidental* meeting with the new deputy, at which he could study him at his leisure and make up his mind whether he was susceptible, at any point, to a suggestion of a bargain. If that plan should prove too impracticable, it would at all events be an easy matter, by making a friendly, official revelation to Madame de l'Estorade of the underhand plots that seemed to be under way against Sallenauve, to induce him to be more circumspect and consequently less aggressive. All this would come about naturally enough as a result of the step the minister was now taking. Pretending to have come to apologize for Monsieur de Ronquerolles's discourteous words, he would lead the conversation, without the slightest appearance of premeditation, to the man who had been the occasion and the subject of those words, and when the conversation was once upon that *track*, he must needs be very awkward if he could not obtain one or the other, or perhaps both, of the desired results.

But Monsieur de Rastignac's plan was destined to undergo some modification. The servant, who answered the call of the concierge, was on the point of replying that Madame de l'Estorade was not at home, when Monsieur de l'Estorade, who was returning home on foot, saw the minister's carriage and rushed to the door. However high one's position in society, to lose a visit of such value always seems a little cruel, and the president of the Cour des Comptes was not the man to submit to such a catastrophe without struggling against it.

"But my wife will be at home very soon," he insisted, upon learning of the good fortune of which his house threatened to be deprived; "she has gone to Ville-d'Avray with her daughter and Monsieur and Madame Octave de Camps. Monsieur Marie-Gaston, one of our dear friends, you know, the handsome poet who married Louise de Chaulieu, has a country house there, in which his wife died; this is the first time he has set foot in the house since the catastrophe. The ladies were charitable enough to go with him in order to deaden the first shock of his recollections, and also, to some extent, from curiosity, for that villa is said to be one of the loveliest hermitages imaginable."

"In that case," said Rastignac, "Madame de l'Estorade's absence is likely to be prolonged. It was to her, not to you, my dear count, that I desire to present my apologies for the scene of last evening, which seemed to affect her keenly. Will you kindly say to her from me—"

"I would stake my head, my dear minister," Monsieur de l'Estorade eagerly interrupted him, "that you will not have turned the corner of the street before my wife is here; she is the very soul of punctuality in everything that she does, and it is really a most extraordinary thing to me when she is even a few minutes behindhand."

Finding his host so determined not to allow him to go, Rastignac feared to be discourteous, and so he decided—considering that loyal votes have often been lost for less—to allow himself to be unpacked from his carriage and set down in the countess's salon pending her return.

"So Madame Octave de Camps is in Paris?" he asked, to say something.

"Yes, she arrived unexpectedly, without sending word to my wife, although they correspond quite regularly. Her husband has something to ask you, I believe; you have not seen him?"

"No; but I have an idea, now that you mention it, that I have received his card."

"It is a mining concession that he has in view, and, as I have you in my power, allow me to say a word to you about it."

"*Parbleu!*" thought Rastignac, "it's a great joke if I have come here only to be met with a point-blank volley of recommendations!"

So he cut short the explanation upon which the count had already entered; and as he saw no objection to asking the husband, without preparation, for one of the favors he had planned to obtain from the wife, he said:

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, we will talk of this again; but at this moment I am in great perplexity."

"How so?"

"The election of your friend Sallenauve is making a devil of a noise; the king mentioned it to me this morning, and I did not relieve his mind much by telling him the opinion you expressed last evening of this newly-risen adversary of ours."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* the tribune is, as you know, a terribly dangerous reef for reputations built up in advance; but I am sorry that you represented Sallenauve to the king as an intimate friend of ours. I don't run the elections; the Minister of the Interior is the man to be called to account. I know that, for my own part, I used a thousand arguments with the annoying fellow to prevent him from coming forward."

"But, you understand that the king cannot blame you for knowing a man who has been elected deputy so unexpectedly—"

"No; but last evening, in your salon, you said to my wife that she was much interested in him. I did not choose to contradict you before witnesses, for after all one cannot deny a man to whom one is under such great obligations. But my wife, especially, since the day he left Paris to look after his election, has seemed to be annoyed by our burden of gratitude. Although she takes no part in politics, she likes the people who are in our waters, and she must see that intimate relations with a man who is going to fire on us day after day, will be embarrassing and only moderately agreeable. Indeed, she told me the other day that it was an acquaintance to be allowed to die out—"

"Not altogether, I trust," Rastignac interrupted, "until you have rendered me a service I mean to ask at your hand."

"Always and in everything at your service, my dear minister."

"To put my feet in the platter, without ceremony, I would like an opportunity to gauge our man before I see him in the Chamber, and for that purpose I would like to meet him. To send him an invitation to dinner would be quite useless; with the eyes of his party upon him, he would not dare to accept, even if he should want to; and, moreover, he would be on his guard and I should not see him as he really is. Whereas, if I happen to fall in his way, I shall see him *en déshabillé*, and shall be better able to feel him and see if he has any vulnerable side."

"To ask you to dine with him at my house would be open to the same objections. Suppose that I should arrange to know that he was likely to come here some evening, and should send word to you during the day?"

"Then there would be only a few of us," observed Rastignac; "to carry on a private conversation under such circumstances is very difficult; people are so close together that the aggravating circumstance of premeditation is at once apparent as soon as one seeks to arrange an aside—"

"Stay!" cried Monsieur de l'Estorade, "a happy thought has just occurred to me."

"If it proves to be really a happy thought," said the minister to himself, "I shall have done better not to have met the wife, who would never have entered into my plan with such warmth as this."

"In a few days," continued the president of the Cour des Comptes, "we are to have a little party, a children's ball; it is a fancy of our daughter's, which Madame de l'Estorade, weary of the struggle, has consented to gratify, to celebrate our good fortune in having her still with us. You will see that the rescuer is an integral and essential factor; I think that I can promise you such an uproar that you can corner your man at your ease, and premeditation certainly will not be suspected on an occasion of that sort."

"That is indeed a most excellent scheme, except in the matter of probability."

"What do you say? probability?"

"To be sure: you forget that I have been married hardly a year, and that I have no youthful contingent to bring, to justify my presence here at that function."

"True, I didn't think of that."

"But let us see," said the minister; "are the little La Roche-Hugons included among your proposed guests?"

"There is no doubt of that; the daughters of one of the men for whom I should have the highest esteem, even if he had not the honor to be so closely connected with you."

Well, then it is all right; my wife comes with her sister-in-law, Madame de la Roche-Hugon, to see her nieces dance; nothing could be more acceptable, on such an occasion, than the impropriety of appearing without an invitation; and then I, without informing my wife of my purpose, pay her the delicate attention of coming to fetch her."

"Excellent!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "and think of us who, by virtue of this comedy, obtain the delightful privilege of the presence of you both!"

"You are too kind!" said Rastignac, grasping the hand of the peer of France with much warmth; "but I think you had better not mention our plan to Madame de l'Estorade; our puritan, if he should get wind of it, would be just the man not to come; it will be much better for me to pounce on him unexpectedly, like a tiger on his prey."

"Very good. A complete surprise for everybody!"

"I will run away then," said Rastignac, "lest we should say something before Madame de l'Estorade. I shall amuse the king mightily to-morrow by telling him of our little plot, and how children are raised to the condition of a political expedient."

"Oh! bless my soul!" replied Monsieur de l'Estorade philosophically, "is not that the general rule in life, great effects from small causes!"

Rastignac had hardly gone when Madame de l'Estorade, her daughter Naïs and her friend Madame Octave de Camps and her husband entered the salon, where the plot had just been formed against the independence of the new deputy,—a plot which we have described at considerable length, as a specimen of the thousand and one petty details with which the intellect of a constitutional minister is often called upon to deal.

"Don't you notice anything like a ministerial odor here?" queried Monsieur de l'Estorade, with a laugh.

"That is not a particularly pleasant odor," replied Monsieur de Camps, who was a legitimist and therefore in opposition.

"That's a matter of taste," retorted the peer of France.—"My dear love," he added, turning to his wife, "you come too late, you have just missed a very pleasant call."

"Who was it?" asked the countess, indifferently.

"The Minister of Public Works, who came to offer you his excuses. He noticed with regret the disagreeable impression that the theories of that scamp de Ronquerolles seemed to make upon you."

"He makes a great deal of a very little," replied Madame de l'Estorade, failing to share her husband's enthusiasm.

"None the less," said the president, "it was very gracious of him to make that observation."

Madame de l'Estorade, to avoid seeming to attach any importance to the matter, inquired what was said during the visit.

"We talked on indifferent subjects," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, cunningly, "except for a word which I took occasion to say as to Monsieur de Camps's matter."

"Much obliged," said that gentleman, bowing; "if you had simply obtained leave for me to speak with his private secretary, who is quite as invisible as himself, perhaps they would succeed between them in procuring me an audience."

"You must not take it ill of them," rejoined Monsieur de l'Estorade; "although Rastignac's is not a political department, he cannot fail to be deeply interested in the electoral question; now that he is more at liberty, we will go together and see him some morning, if you wish."

"I dislike to disturb you concerning a matter that ought to go through of itself, for I am not asking a favor. I shall never ask one at the hands of your government; but, as Monsieur de Rastignac is the dragon stationed to keep watch over the metallic treasures of our soil, I must beard him in his den."

"We will arrange all that, and I have already given the affair a good start," said Monsieur de l'Estorade.

Then, to change the subject, he turned to Madame de Camps.

"Well," he said, "is the château really such a marvellous place?"

"Oh! it is an enchanting spot," said Madame Octave; "you cannot conceive such exquisite taste and such perfect comfort."

"And Marie-Gaston?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, about as Orgon asks: "And Tartuffe?" but with much less eager interest.

"He was, I will not say very calm," replied

Madame de l'Estorade, " but at all events perfectly self-controlled; his attitude was all the more gratifying to me because the day began with a serious disappointment."

" What was that, pray?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade.

" Monsieur de Sallenauve wasn't able to go with him," said Naïs, taking it upon herself to reply.

She was one of those children brought up under glass, who take part in conversation that is carried on in their presence a little more frequently than they ought.

" Naïs," said Madame de l'Estorade, " go and tell Mary to comb your hair."

The child understood perfectly well that she was sent away to her English maid for talking at an unseasonable time, and she left the room with a pout.

" This morning," said Madame de l'Estorade, as soon as Naïs had closed the door behind her, " Monsieur Marie-Gaston and Monsieur de Sallenauve were to have gone to Ville-d'Avray together, in order to be there to receive us, as had been agreed upon. Last evening the organist, who was so active in the matter of Monsieur de Sallenauve's election, called upon them; he came to hear the lovely Italian housekeeper sing, and decide whether she were sufficiently advanced to appear on the stage."

"Ah! yes," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, " we should like to find a place for her somewhere, now that we no longer make statues."

"As you say," rejoined Madame de l'Estorade, with a suspicion of sarcasm, "to cut short all calumny, Monsieur de Sallenauve intended to put her in a way to carry out her idea of going on the stage, but he desired, first of all, to have the opinion of a judge who was said to be perfectly competent. Accompanied by the organist, Messieurs Marie-Gaston and de Sallenauve went to Saint-Sulpice, where the fair Italian sings every evening, during the services appropriate to the *month of Marie*. After listening to her, the organist said: "She's a contralto, who has, at the lowest estimate, sixty thousand francs in her voice."

"Just the income from my furnaces!" observed Monsieur Octave de Camps.

"On her return from the church," continued Madame de l'Estorade, "Monsieur de Sallenauve informed the fair housekeeper of the opinion that had been expressed concerning her talent, and, with all possible caution, hinted to her that she must soon begin to think about supporting herself as she had always intended to do. 'Yes, I think that the time has come,' said Signora Luigia. Then she changed the subject, saying: 'We will talk of this again.' This morning, at the breakfast hour, they were greatly surprised at the non-appearance of the signora, who is a very early riser. Thinking that she must be ill, Monsieur de Sallenauve sent a woman who comes in to do the heavy work of the house, to knock at her door. No reply. With increasing anxiety, Messieurs Marie-Gaston and de

Sallenauve went themselves to ascertain what the trouble was. After knocking and calling to no purpose, they decided to make use of the key, which was in the door. In the room, no housekeeper, but in her stead and place a letter addressed to Monsieur de Sallenauve. In the letter the Italian told him that, knowing that she was a burden to him, she had gone to live with one of her friends, and that she thanked him for all his kindness to her."

"The bird found that it had wings," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "it has taken flight."

"That was not Monsieur de Sallenauve's idea," rejoined the countess; "he believes that she is a thousand leagues from any such contemptible exhibition of ingratitude. But, before divulging to his constituents the nature of their relations, Monsieur de Sallenauve, having become convinced that he would be questioned upon that subject, had the delicacy to write to her to ascertain if such a public announcement would be very offensive to her. She replied that she gave him *carte blanche*. But, upon his return to Paris, he noticed that she seemed sad and treated him with more ceremony than usual, whence he concluded that, feeling that she had become a burden to him, in obedience to one of the rash impulses to which she is more subject than most people, she had decided that she was in duty bound to leave his house and that he must not be allowed to concern himself in any way with the ordering of her future."

"Well, good luck to her!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "good riddance!"

"Neither Monsieur de Sallenauve nor Monsieur Marie-Gaston took the matter so stoically. In view of the woman's wilful, determined character, they fear some attempt to commit violence upon herself, a fear that is justified by a previous occurrence. They dread, too, the influence of bad advice. This charwoman, of whom I spoke just now, noticed, during the absence of the gentlemen, that Signora Luigia received two or three mysterious visits from a middle-aged woman, richly dressed, who came in a carriage, but whose general appearance was unusual, and who was very careful that their interviews should be enveloped in secrecy."

"It must have been some lady connected with a charitable association," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "as the fugitive is a very pious person."

"At all events, it is necessary to find out who she was, and Monsieur de Sallenauve, by Marie-Gaston's advice, has employed the day in endeavoring to ascertain what has become of the unfortunate creature, instead of going with him to Ville-d'Avray."

"I hold to what I have said," rejoined Monsieur de l'Estorade, "and, despite all their combined virtue, I say that he is very fond of her."

"At all events, it would not seem that she is very *fond* of him," observed Madame de l'Estorade, underlining the word by her accent.

"I do not agree with you," said Madame Octave de Camps; "to avoid a person is often the surest proof of love."

Madame de l'Estorade glanced at her friend with a vexed expression, and her cheeks flushed slightly. But no one had an opportunity to notice it, as a domestic threw open the folding-doors of the salon, and announced:

"Madame is served."

After dinner, the subject of going to the theatre was discussed; that is one of the amusements which are especially missed in the provinces, and Monsieur Octave de Camps, who, through the instrumentality of his *miserable furnaces*, as Madame de l'Estorade called them, had become a sort of backwoodsman, was very thirsty for that diversion when he came to Paris; whereas his wife, who was of a serious, sedate turn, was far from feeling the same inclination for it. So that, when Monsieur de Camps suggested going to the Porte Saint-Martin to see a fairy play which was then attracting all Paris, Madame Octave replied:

"Neither Madame de l'Estorade nor I have the slightest desire to go out; we are thoroughly exhausted by our excursion, and we will give our seats to René and Naïs, who will enjoy the miracles of *La Fée aux Roses* much more than we."

The two children awaited with an anxiety that can readily be imagined the ratification of this arrangement, to which Madame de l'Estorade made no objection; so that, a few moments later, the two friends, who had had no opportunity to arrange a a real tête-à-tête since Madame de Camps's arrival in Paris, found themselves at last with a long evening's chat before them.

"I am at home to no one," said Madame de l'Estorade to Lucas, as soon as her flock had flown.

Thereupon, taking as a starting-point for the serious conversation which was to ensue the last remark made by Madame Octave before dinner, she said to her:

"You have some charming well-sharpened axioms that fly as straight to those at whom they are aimed, as pretty little arrows!"

"Now that we are alone," rejoined Madame de Camps, "I propose to pursue my argument with a club, for I have not, as you may imagine, travelled two hundred leagues, and left all our interests to take care of themselves after Monsieur de Camps has trained me to replace him when he is absent, for the purpose of telling you the truth wrapped in cotton-wool."

"I am ready to listen to anything from you," said Madame de l'Estorade, pressing the hand of her whom she called her *dear directress*."

"Your last letter simply horrified me!"

"Why so? because I myself told you that that man frightened me and that I should exert my wits to find some way of keeping him at a distance?"

"Yes. Up to that time I had had some doubt as to what advice I ought to give you; but at that moment I began to be so anxious about you, that, notwithstanding all Monsieur de Camps's objections to my taking the journey, I insisted upon coming, and here I am!"

"But really I fail to understand."

"Let us see; suppose Monsieur de Camps, Monsieur Marie-Gaston, or even Monsieur de Rastignac, in spite of the ecstasy which his visits cause Monsieur de l'Estorade, should threaten to become a constant visitor here, would you be so terribly alarmed?"

"Certainly not; because no one of them would have such an advantage over me as this man of whom I am afraid."

"Tell me, do you believe that Monsieur de Sallenauve is in love with you?"

"No; I believe that I am sure now of the contrary; but I believe, too, so far as I am concerned—"

"We will come to that question directly. I ask you now if you have any desire that Monsieur de Sallenauve should fall in love with you?"

"God forbid!"

"Very well; a charming way of setting him on your heels is to wound his self-esteem, to make yourself appear unjust and ungrateful to him, in a word, to force him to think about you all the time."

"But is not that rather a far-fetched conclusion, my dear?"

"Why, my dear love, have you never noticed that men, because they have little sensibility, are attracted much more by harsh treatment at our hands than by our caresses; that, by dealing harshly with them, we establish ourselves more firmly in their thoughts; and that they are much like those little parlor dogs who are never so anxious to bite as when you pull your hand quickly away?"

"On that theory, all the men whom one disdains, of whom one does not think enough to give them a glance, become so many suitors."

"Oh! my dear, don't put idiotic remarks in my mouth. It goes without saying that, in order to take fire, matter must have a tendency to combustibility; that, in order to go to a man's head in the way I describe, we must first have had some sort of acquaintance with him; and it seems to me that there has been a very effectual beginning as between you and Monsieur de Sallenauve. If he does not love *you*, he loves your face and figure, and as you yourself wittily said one day, who can say that, if the *other person* should prove to be definitively lost to him, he may not *rebound* toward you?"

"On the contrary, he has stronger hopes than ever of finding her, with the assistance of a very skilful searcher, who is on her track."

"Very good; but, if he does not find her, or if he does not find her for a very long time, ought you to employ the interval in attracting him to your arms?"

"I do not assent to your theory by any means, my dear moralist, at least, so far as Monsieur de Sallenauve is concerned; he is going to be very busy, the Chamber will arouse his interest much more powerfully than my face; he is a man, too, abounding in self-esteem, who will be disgusted by my spiteful behavior, which will seem to him immeasurably unfair and ungrateful; and if I attempt to place an interval of two feet between us, he will make it four; you can rely upon it."

"And what of yourself, my dear?" queried Madame de Camps.

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, you, who are not busy, who have not the distraction of the Chamber; who have, I am very glad to agree, much self-esteem, but whose knowledge of matters relating to the heart is about equal to that of a boarding-school miss or a nurse,—what will become of you under the hazardous régime that you propose to inflict upon yourself?"

"Why, if I do not love him at close quarters, I shall certainly love him much less at a distance."

"So that, if you find that he submits with apparent indifference to his ostracism, your womanly self-esteem will not be in the least surprised?"

"Why, no; for it will be the precise result I desire."

"And if you hear, on the other hand, that he complains of you, or that, without complaining, he suffers keenly on account of your action, your conscience will have absolutely nothing to say?"

"It will tell me that I have done right, that I could not have acted otherwise."

"And if he achieves a success, whose echo reaches your ears, if his name fills the hundred mouths of renown, you will not even remember his existence?"

"I shall think of him as I think of Monsieur Thiers or Monsieur Berryer."

"And what about Naïs, who thinks of nothing but him, and who will say to you even more enthusiastically than on the first day he dined with you: 'How well he speaks, mamma!' "

"If you take a little girl's prattle into account!"

"And how about Monsieur de l'Estorade, who irritates you already, when, beginning from this time on to offer up sacrifices to party spirit, he lets drop some unkind insinuation concerning Monsieur de Sallenauve;—you will impose silence on him when he constantly mentions this man to you, only to deny him any talent or elevation of mind; you know the judgment we always form of people who do not think as we do!"

"Do you mean to say," inquired Madame de l'Estorade, "that I never shall be so much inclined to think about him as when I no longer have him in my field of vision?"

"That very thing has already happened to you once, my dear friend, when he used to follow you about the streets, and his abandonment of that practice, taking you by surprise, caused the same effect produced by a drum suddenly ceasing its uproar, after deafening you for an hour."

"There was a reason for that; his non-appearance upset my whole plan."

"Listen to me, my dear love," rejoined Madame de Camps, with a shade of seriousness in her tone, "I have read your letters again and again; you were more natural and less inclined to split hairs in them, and I gathered one impression which I still retain: it was that Monsieur de Sallenauve had at least grazed your heart, even if he had not found his way in."

At a gesture of denial from Madame de l'Estorade, her zealous directress continued:

"I know that you will bristle up at that idea. How could you admit to me something that you have always carefully concealed from yourself? But what is, is: one does not feel a sort of magnetic current flowing from a man, one is not conscious of his glance even without meeting his eyes, one does not cry out: 'Is it not true, madame, that I am invulnerable so far as love is concerned?' unless one has already received some severe blow!"

"But so many things have happened since I wrote those absurdities!"

"To be sure, he was only a sculptor, and yet, in a short time,—I do not say like Monsieur de Rastignac, which would be saying very little, but like Canalis, our great poet,—perhaps he will be a minister!"

"I like sermons that come to an end," said Madame de l'Estorade, with a suggestion of impatience.

"You say to me," rejoined Madame de Camps, "what Vergniaud cried to Robespierre on the 31st of May, for, in my leisure hours in our woods, I have read the history of the French Revolution; and I answer, as Robespierre did: 'Yes, I am coming to an end;' and my conclusion is adverse to your self-esteem, the self-esteem of a woman who, having lived to be thirty-two years old without suspecting what love means, even in marriage, cannot consent at this late day to submit to the common law of mankind; adverse to the memory of all the sermons you preached at Louise de Chaulieu, to prove that the passion that lays hold of our hearts is the worst of all calamities, just as you would prove to a sick man that to allow his lungs to become inflamed, as he has, was the worst imprudence he could commit; adverse to your ghastly ignorance, which imagines that a strongly emphasized *I will not!* will triumph over an impulse complicated by a combination of circumstances from which the cleverest woman—my cousin, the Princesse de Cadignan, for instance—would have difficulty in extricating herself."

"But the practical conclusion?" said Madame de l'Estorade, beating a tattoo upon her knee with her pretty hands.

"This is my conclusion," Madame Octave replied. "Virtually, especially if you are not foolish enough to try to stem the current, I see no danger of your being submerged. You are strong, you are high-principled and devout, you adore your children, and you love Monsieur de l'Estorade, their father, in them, the man who has been your life-companion for fifteen years; with all that ballast a vessel doesn't sink, but is staunch and seaworthy, believe me."

"And in that case?" said Madame de l'Estorade, in an interrogative tone.

"In that case, there is no need to resort to violent means, the success of which I consider very problematical, to preserve an impassibility which is impossible under certain circumstances, and which one has already three-quarters lost. You are convinced that Monsieur de Sallenauve is not the man to think of ever making you take another step toward him; you yourself agree that he is a thousand leagues from thinking of such a thing. So remain where you are; do not throw up barricades when no one attacks you; do not work yourself up over a purposeless defence, in which you can arouse violent tempests in your heart and conscience, while believing that you are bringing peace to your conscience and soothing your heart, which is simply ruffled by a gentle zephyr. It is doubtless true that, between man and woman, the sentiment of friendship assumes something of the nature of the usual warmer relation between the sexes, but it is neither an impossible illusion nor an ever-yawning abyss. Is it not true that, if Louise de Chaulieu and her excellent first husband, Monsieur de Macumer, had lived, your relations with him would have been ere this upon a footing of familiarity and confidence which had never existed between you and any other man? Is it not true that you are upon exceptionally intimate terms with her second husband, Monsieur Marie-Gaston, in memory of the friend you have lost? and tell me, would you have made the charitable visit we decided to make to-day, even in the company of my husband and myself and your daughter, to any stranger whom you had not known something about beforehand?"

"Then I am to make a friend of Monsieur de Sallenauve?" said Madame de l'Estorade in a musing tone.

"Yes, my love, in order that he may not become a fixed idea, a source of regret or of remorse, three things which poison life."

"But society, that is always on the watch! and my husband, who has already had a fit of jealousy!"

"You compromise yourself as much and more in the eyes of society, my dear, by trying to throw it off the scent than by any liberties you take openly. Do you suppose, for example, that your sudden departure from Madame de Rastignac's last night, in order to avoid listening to what might be said of your obligation to Monsieur de Sallenauve, was not noticed? And would not a more tranquil bearing have served much better to disguise your gratitude, which you betrayed, after all, by exhibiting such emotion?"

"You are right in that; but the impudence of some people seems to have the faculty of irritating one beyond endurance—"

"As for your husband, he seems to me somewhat changed, and not to his advantage; I used to admire his absolute respect, his unlimited deference for your whole personality, all your ideas, all your feelings; that sort of canine submission exalted him more than he imagines, because it is one form of grandeur to know how to obey and admire. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that politics has spoiled him so far as you are concerned; as you cannot take his place on the benches of the Chamber of Peers, he has begun to suspect that he might properly so arrange matters as to have an existence of his own. If I were in your place, I would look out for these little essays at independence, and I would bring forward the cabinet question, as that question happens to be in the order of the day with regard to the case of this same Monsieur de Sallenauve."

"Do you know, my dear love," laughed Madame de l'Estorade, "that you are a very agreeable pest, and that you advise me to lay waste everything with fire and sword?"

"Not at all, my dear; I am a woman of forty-five, who has always looked at things on their positive side; I did not marry my husband, whom I loved passionately, until I had satisfied myself, by subjecting him to a very severe test, that he deserved my esteem. I do not make life, I take it as it is; trying to bring order into all the conditions it may present and to make them tolerable. I have neither the frantic passion of Louise de Chaulieu, nor the fierce common sense of Renée de l'Estorade; I am a sort of Jesuit in petticoats, convinced that rather full sleeves are more becoming than sleeves tight at the wrist, and I have never been attacked by the *thirst for the absolute.*"

At that moment Lucas opened the door of the salon and announced Monsieur de Sallenauve. As his mistress looked at him with an expression that asked him the meaning of such slight attention to her orders, Lucas replied with a gesture that seemed to say that the visitor was an *article* not included in the decree of prohibition as he understood it. While Sallenauve took possession of the armchair that was brought forward for him, Madame de Camps whispered to her friend:

"You see! even the servants have an instinctive feeling that he is no common visitor."

Madame de Camps, who had never before met the new deputy, devoted her whole attention to watching him, and she did not repent having preached against the advisability of putting any affront upon him. Sallenauve explained his call by alleging his great curiosity to learn how affairs had passed off at Ville-d'Avray; if he had learned that Marie-Gaston had seemed too deeply affected, he would have gone at once to join him, despite the lateness of the hour. As for the search in which his day had been passed, it had as yet been rewarded with no sort of success. Availing himself of his title of Deputy, a sort of universal passport, he had seen the prefect of police, who had referred him to Monsieur de Saint-Estève, the head of the secret police. Being cognizant, as all Paris was, of the man's past, he had been greatly surprised to find him a man of very agreeable manners; but that great detective had given him no hope.

"A woman in hiding in Paris," he had said, "is like an eel hidden in the darkest of its holes."

He himself, with the assistance of Jacques Bricheteau, proposed to continue his search through the following day; but if, when night came, neither he nor the great inquisitor of the police had discovered anything, he had decided to start at once for Ville-d'Avray to join Marie-Gaston, concerning whom he did not share Madame de l'Estorade's feeling of security. As he was taking his leave, prior to the return of Monsieur de l'Estorade and Monsieur Octave de Camps, who had promised to come back for his wife, Madame de l'Estorade said to him:

"Do not forget that Naïs's ball is to come off on the day after to-morrow in the evening. You will have a terrible account to settle with her, if you do not appear. Try to induce Marie-Gaston to come with you; it will be something to distract his mind."

When he returned from the theatre, Monsieur Octave de Camps declared that it would be a long while before anyone persuaded him to go to see another fairy-play. Naïs, on the other hand, still under the spell of the marvels she had witnessed, began to give an animated description of the performance, which showed how deeply her youthful imagination had been impressed by it.

"That girl worries me," said Madame de Camps to her husband as they left the house; "she reminds me of Moïna d'Aiglemont. Madame de l'Estorade has developed her too fast; I should not be surprised if she caused her a great deal of anxiety hereafter."

*

It would be difficult to fix upon the precise moment when a new variety of religion made its appearance in our contemporary manners, a religion that we may call *child-idolatry*. Nor should we find it a much simpler matter to discover what sort of influence is responsible for the prodigious development that that cult has attained to-day. But, although unexplained as yet, the fact exists and must be reckoned with by every faithful historian of the great and petty movements of our social system. To-day the children have taken the place in the family that was occupied among the ancients by the household gods, and whoever should refuse to join in their worship, would be looked upon, not as an exacting and soured creature, not as a crabbed and vexatious obstructionist, but as an atheist pure and simple. The momentary influence that Rousseau exerted upon the mother-spirit, in the way of inducing mothers to nurse their children, has gone out of fashion; but only a superficial observer could dream of contradicting this other observation. To anyone who has been present at the solemn deliberation concerning the choice of a wet-nurse, and has taken note of the position assumed in the domestic economy of the household by that sovereign of the greedy little toper, as soon as the quality of her milk is found to be satisfactory, it is evident that the mother's renunciation in her favor is only the first of her sacrifices. Being declared by the physician and the midwife, whom it has not occurred to her to bribe, unable to *nurse* her child, it is solely in the interest of the tiny creature to whom she has given birth—that is always agreed—that she must become resigned to the necessity of refusing him her milk. But what passionate devotion and what solicitude hover about the child, who, by this sublime self-abnegation, is placed in possession—as boarding-school teachers say—of more healthful and more abundant nourishment! How often is the physician aroused in the night to come and give his opinion that the most harmless indigestion is not a terrible attack of croup! How many times, when his presence is desired at a death-bed, does the same physician answer an urgent summons, only to be questioned in an agony of alarm by the weeping mother, who has discovered that her little angel is *peevish*, or *pale*, or that he has not soiled his clothes in the usual way! At last the child has passed through that first, painful period, and having graduated from his nurse's arms, he ceases to wear the Henri IV. hat bedecked with feathers and cockades like an Andalusian mule; but, thereupon, he or his young contemporaries proceed to remind us of Spain in another way; consecrated to the Virgin and dressed all in white, you would take them for youthful statues of the *Commander*, borrowed from the opera of *Don Juan*. Some, following in the footsteps of Walter Scott and *La Dame Blanche*, look as if they had come down from the mountains of Scotland, so closely they imitate the costume, even to the kilt and the bare legs. More frequently the dear idols form a new edition in costume of the national annals, as Monsieur Ballanche would have said; and as you encounter at the Tuileries the velvet doublets, the lace collars, the hair cut square à la Charles VI., the hats *à la cavalière*, the short cloaks, the knee breeches and shoes with rosettes of the time of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., you can take a course in French history, told by tailors and dressmakers with stricter accuracy than by Mézeray or Président Hénault. Then there is renewed anxiety, if not concerning the present health, at all events concerning the generally fragile constitutions of our little domestic divinities, and sea-bathing, country air, or a trip to the Pyrenees is imperatively prescribed every year, with a view to strengthening them. It goes without saying that, during the four or five months employed by the mother in that constant locomotion for hygienic purposes, the husband, if he is detained in Paris, has to reconcile himself to his widowhood, to a closed and deserted house, and to the derangement of all his habits.

With the coming of winter, however, the family is reconstituted; but do you suppose that the darling, adored creatures, puffed up as they are with flattery and attention, are to be amused, like the generations born in the old infanticide, unfeeling days, with toys and dolls and Punch and Judy shows at two sous? Go to! The boys must have ponies and cigarettes, and newspaper novels to read; and the girls the pleasure of playing at being mistress of the house, of giving afternoon dances and evening parties with the real *Guignol* from the Champs-Elysées, and Robert Houdin announced upon the cards of invitation: and those worthies are not like Lambert and Molière; when they have once allowed their names to be printed on the programme, you are sure of them. And sometimes these little sovereigns obtain permission, as Naïs de l'Estorade had done, to give a party of sufficient importance to require a few policemen to be stationed at the door, and to let Delisle and Nattier and Prévost know what was about to happen from the quantities of silks and artificial flowers and bouquets sold for the occasion. No one was more capable than Naïs, blessed as she was with the character of which we have caught a glimpse, to carry out the part and perform the duties about to devolve upon her by her mother's abdication in her favor of all her power and all her authority. This abdication dated farther back than the actual beginning of the party, for Mademoiselle Naïs de l'Estorade had, in her own name, invited her guests to do her the honor of coming to pass the evening *with her;* and as Madame de l'Estorade did not choose to carry the parody so far as to allow the cards to be printed, Naïs had passed several days in writing her notes of invitation, taking care to place in bold relief the sacramental formula: *there will be dancing*. Nothing could be more amusing, or, as Madame Octave de Camps, judging from the remark we have heard her make, would say, nothing could be more alarming than the self-possession of that child of thirteen, standing, as she had seen her mother stand on similar occasions, at the door of the salon, and, as her guests arrived, shading her greetings with the nicest discrimination, from the most affectionate warmth to a coldness that bordered on disdain. Upon her dear friends she bestowed an effusive grasp of the hand, in the English fashion; for the others she had a supply of smiles, graded, so to speak, according to the degree of intimacy; and simple inclinations of the head for those who were indifferent to her and for strangers; a word or two from time to time and delicious motherly airs for the little tots who are perforce included in the personnel of these childish routs, dangerous and difficult as it is to handle them.

As a general rule, with the fathers and mothers of her guests, as the fête was not given for them and was founded entirely upon the words of the Gospel: *Suffer little children to come unto me*, Naïs de l'Estorade was careful not to overstep the limits of cold but respectful courtesy. But when Lucas, following the instructions he had received, reversed the usual order of precedence and announced: "Mesdemoiselles de la Roche-Hugon, Madame la Baronne de Roche-Hugon, and Madame la Comtesse de Rastignac," the little schemer laid aside her reserve; she ran to meet the minister's wife, and, with the prettiest grace imaginable, seized her hand and raised it gallantly to her lips. On their part, Madame de l'Estorade, and her husband more particularly, hastened to greet their unexpected guest, and, refusing to allow her to enter into any apologies for the liberty she had taken in coming under her sister-in-law's auspices and over and above the bargain, so to speak, they escorted her to a place of honor from which she could see at a glance the whole fête, which had already attained a high degree of animation. Naïs could not accept all the invitations which the most elegant young lions vied with one another in pouring upon her, and so she departed from the order of her engagements to some extent. Notwithstanding the famous *entente cordiale* between the two nations, her fickleness came very near reviving the eternal rivalry between perfidious Albion and France. A contra-dance promised twice over was on the verge of leading to unpleasant complications between a young peer of England, aged ten, and a pupil of a naval preparatory school,—Pension Barniol, see *Les Annonces*,—and the young heir to the peerage had put himself in an attitude to *bôoxer*. When this dispute was adjusted, another incident occurred. A little urchin, spying a platter laden with syrups and pastry, just after a polka in which he had become drenched with perspiration, endeavored to refresh himself; but as he was not tall enough to reach the objects of his greed conveniently, at the height at which they were held by the servant, he conceived the lamentable idea of pulling on the edge of the platter until its contents should be within his reach: thereupon the platter tipped, lost its equilibrium, and discharged at one corner, which formed a spout like that of the urn representing a mythological river, a sort of cascade of orgeat, gooseberry syrup, and *capillaire*, formed by the contents of the glasses as they overturned. Fortunate had it been had the imprudent youth been the only one to suffer from the sudden inundation of that saccharine torrent; but, amid the confusion caused by that disastrous incident, ten innocent victims were splashed and spattered, and among them were five or six young Bacchantes who, in their rage at the damage inflicted upon their dresses, seemed inclined to make another Orpheus of the awkward imp. He was at last, but with great difficulty, rescued from their hands and turned over to those of a German governess, who had run to the spot when she heard the uproar.

"What an idea it was of Naïs," said a charming little blonde to a young Scotchman with whom she had danced throughout the evening, "to invite little boys of that age!"

"I can understand it," replied the Scotchman; "he's the son of somebody at the Cour des Comptes; Naïs was obliged to have him on account of his parents; it's a matter of policy."

He took the arm of one of his young friends.

"I say, Ernest," he said, "I would like to smoke a cigar! Suppose, while all this row is going on, we try to find some quiet place?"

"I can't, my dear fellow," replied Ernest, mysteriously; "you know Léontine always makes a scene when she notices that I've been smoking. She is charming to me to-night. Here, see what she has just given me!"

"Bah! a horsehair ring, with two burning hearts!" said the Scotchman, scornfully. "All schoolboys do that sort of thing."

"What could you show, yourself?" replied Ernest, in an offended tone.

"Oh!" said the Scotchman, knowingly, "we have something better than that."

He took from the game-bag, which was an essential part of his costume, a note upon perfumed sky-blue paper.

"There," he added, putting it under Ernest's nose, "just smell that."

Ernest, not a very honorable friend, pounced upon the note and got possession of it; the Scotchman, in a rage, rushed at him to recover it. Thereupon Monsieur de l'Estorade intervened, having not the remotest suspicion of the cause of the quarrel, and separated the adversaries, so that the thief was at liberty to retire to a corner and gloat over his plunder. The note contained no writing. The young rascal had taken that odoriferous sheet, which his mamma would probably have transformed into something less immaculate, from her blotting-case that morning. A little later Ernest went up to the young Scotchman again:

"Here's your note," he said, in a bantering tone; "it's rather compromising."

"Keep it, monsieur," replied the Scotchman. "I will call upon you for it to-morrow, under the chestnut-trees at the Tuileries; meanwhile, understand that all is over between us!"

Ernest was less chivalrous; he contented himself with putting the thumb of his outspread right hand to his nose, for all reply, and insolently made the hand revolve upon that axis; a disdainful gesture which he had learned from his mother's coachman; then he ran to take his partner for a quadrille that was just beginning.

But on what petty details we are wasting our time, when we know that interests of the most exalted order are moving beneath this infantile surface.

Sallenauve, arriving about four o'clock from Ville-d'Avray, where he had passed two days, was unable to give Madame de l'Estorade any encouraging news of his friend. Beneath an appearance of cold resignation, Marie-Gaston was terribly depressed, and furthermore—a truly alarming fact, because it was entirely unnatural—he had not yet been to visit his wife's tomb, as if he realized the probability of an emotion which he did not feel brave enough to face. That mental condition seemed to Sallenauve so disquieting, that had it not been for his fear of angering Naïs by not going to *her* ball, he would have hesitated to leave his friend, who could not be induced to go with him. It seemed that Marie-Gaston had exhausted the remnant of his strength in the morbid state of excitement and gayety which he had reached during the election at Arcis, and now prostration of the most serious kind succeeded the feverish animation which was only partially reflected in his letters to Madame de l'Estorade. One thing had happened, however, to set Sallenauve's mind at rest for the few hours during which he left his *patient:* he was still hesitating as to his duty in the premises, when Marie-Gaston was informed that he had a visitor,—a gentleman whom he had known at Florence and whose visit he seemed to welcome with joy. Some good effect might be anticipated from that unforeseen incident. In order to divert Sallenauve's mind from his apprehensions, which seemed to her exaggerated, Madame de l'Estorade made haste to present him to Monsieur Octave de Camps. That gentleman had expressed a great desire to know him, and the deputy had not talked a quarter of an hour with the iron-master before he had found his way to his heart by virtue of the extensive metallurgical knowledge manifested in his conversation.

The reader will remember that one of Bixiou's principal grievances against the former Dorlange was his pretension, perhaps not to know everything, but to understand everything. For a year past, since he had been giving his attention particularly to preparing for parliamentary life, Sallenauve, having taken no time for his art save what was necessary for his *Sainte Ursule*, had devoted much time to acquiring all sorts of practical knowledge, which justify the orator in taking the floor when he has such knowledge at his tongue's end, to support and corroborate his views upon general politics. And so, although in replying to Monsieur Godivet, the recorder of

Arcis, he had modestly represented himself as knowing nothing of the various matters comprised in his department, he had given his attention, while studying the great questions of the budget and tariff, to all the elements of which they are composed: the customs service, the tax on conveyances of real estate, the stamp tax, and direct and indirect contribution. In like manner, on approaching that science, so problematical and yet so self-confident, known as political economy, Sallenauve had also made himself familiar with all the springs that contribute to form the great stream of national wealth, and therefore the question of mines, with which Monsieur de Camps's thoughts were occupied at that moment, had of course not been neglected by him. We can imagine the admiration of the iron-master, who had devoted himself too exclusively to the question of iron to have learned much in the other branches of metallurgy, when the young deputy told him a sort of Arabian Nights' tale concerning the wealth contained in the soil, but a tale which, when subjected to the verification of science, would prove to be absolutely true.

"What, monsieur," cried Monsieur de Camps, "do you believe that we possess copper and lead and even silver mines, in addition to our coal and iron?"

"If you will consult certain specialists, monsieur," replied Sallenauve, "they will tell you that neither the boasted lodes of Bohemia and Saxony, nor those of Russia or Hungary, are to be compared with those to be found in French territory, in the Pyrenees, the Alps from Briançon to Isère, the Cévennes, especially about Lozère, the Puy-de-Dôme, Bretagne, and the Vosges. In the Vosges, near the town of Saint-Dié, I can tell you of a single vein of silver, which varies from fifty to eighty metres in depth and is thirteen kilometres long."

"But how is it that all this great metallic wealth has never been exploited?"

"It has been," replied Sallenauve, "very many years ago, especially during the period of Roman domination among the Gauls. The mines were abandoned at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, but were worked again during the Middle Ages by the nobles and the clergy; then, during the struggle of feudalism against the royal power and during the long civil wars that brought France to the verge of destruction, they were abandoned once more, and since then no attention has been paid to them."

"You are sure of what you say?"

"The ancient authors, Strabo and the rest, all speak of these mines, the tradition of their having been worked still lives in the provinces in which they are located; the decrees of the emperors and the ordinances of our kings demonstrate their existence and the importance of their output; in certain places, still more convincing proofs are to be met with in the shape of excavations of considerable superficial extent and depth, of galleries and chambers cut in the living rock, and lastly in the multiplied traces of those vast works which immortalized Roman industry. To which I should add that the recent investigations of geological science have everywhere confirmed and complemented these unimpeachable indications."

Monsieur Octave de Camps's imagination, which had been sufficiently excited by a commonplace iron mine to induce him to make the journey to Paris and to appear in the guise of a solicitor of favors from a government he despised, kindled anew at the revelation of all this buried wealth, and he was about to ask his informant for his ideas as to the best way of taking in hand the development of these mines, which had been so strangely neglected, when, by a coincidence, which will not surprise the reader, Lucas, throwing open both wings of the folding-door, announced, in his loudest and most solemn tones:

"Monsieur the Minister of Public Works."

The effect produced upon the assemblage was so electrical, that the shock was felt even by the two gentlemen in their corner.

"Just let me get a look at the face of that little Rastignac, now he's become a minister," said Monsieur de Camps carelessly, leaving his chair.

But in his heart he thought that it was an excellent opportunity to approach the elusive minister, in accordance with the great principle: "*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush;*" so he left the hidden wealth revealed to him by Sallenauve to its slumbers, and returned to his iron mine. For his part, the deputy looked upon a ministerial overture as inevitable; it seemed to him impossible that so zealous a conservative as Monsieur de l'Estorade should not try to arrange it. Now, what would his friends of the opposition say to the news, which would be circulated the next morning, that a representative of the Advanced Left had had a conference, in a ministerial salon, with that one of the ministers most famous for his zeal and his adroitness in effecting political conversions? Already, at the offices of the *National*, Sallenauve had had a foretaste of the tolerant spirit of his party, when he heard an insinuation that the promises of moderation in his parliamentary conduct contained in his electoral profession of faith should not be taken too literally, and that he would soon find himself entirely alone if he should undertake to follow out his theories in practice. Moreover, he was desirous to return at once to Ville-d'Avray after appearing for a moment at Naïs's ball, on account of his intense anxiety concerning Marie-Gaston! for all these reasons, he determined to avail himself of the general excitement to beat a retreat; and by a shrewd manœuvre, cleverly executed, he had already reached the door of the salon, and thought that he could escape unseen. But he had reckoned without Naïs, with whom he had rashly promised to dance a contra-dance. The child began to sound the alarm just as he was turning the knob of the door, and Monsieur de l'Estorade, with the utmost eagerness, as may be imagined, took it upon himself to prevent his desertion. Seeing that his plan had failed, Sallenauve was afraid that to retire when all eyes were upon him would have a puritanical look which might be considered in bad taste ; taking the risk, therefore, of whatever might happen, he allowed his name to be restored to the list of Naïs's partners and decided to remain.

Monsieur de l'Estorade was too well aware of Sallenauve's keen intelligence to hope that he could deceive him as to any ruse he might employ to bring about his meeting with the minister. He went straight forward to his goal, therefore, and, a quarter of an hour after Rastignac's arrival, he walked up to the deputy, with his arm passed through the minister's, and said :

"Allow me to introduce the Minister of Public Works, who desires to be presented, before the battle, to one of the generals of the hostile army."

"Monsieur le ministre does me too much honor," replied Sallenauve, ceremoniously. "Far from being a general, I am only one of the humblest and least known common soldiers."

"Hum!" said the minister, "but I should say that the contest at Arcis-sur-Aube was no small victory, and that you bowled our men over in an extraordinary way there, monsieur!"

"There is nothing very surprising in that: you have probably been informed that a saint fought on my side."

"However," rejoined Rastignac, "I prefer that result to the result that seems to have been sought by a person whom we sent down there, and whom I supposed to be a more skilful manager. It seems that that Beauvisage was decidedly unfitted for the place; he would have reacted on us if we had secured his election, and, after all, he was of the Left Centre, like Giguet the advocate: now the Left Centre is our real enemy, because its attacks on our policy are really aimed at our portfolios."

"Oh!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "from what you were told about the fellow, he would have been whatever anyone wanted him to be."

"Oh! no, my dear friend, don't you believe that; fools often cling much more closely than one would suppose to the flag under which they have enlisted. To go over to the enemy implies making a choice and that implies a rather complicated mental operation; it is much simpler to be pig-headed."

"I agree with monsieur le ministre," said Sallenauve: "extreme innocence and extreme rascality defend themselves with equal success against seduction."

"You kill your man with gentleness," said Monsieur de l'Estorade to Sallenauve, tapping him on the shoulder.

Then, seeing or pretending to see, in the mirror over a mantel in front of which they were standing, a sign that somebody made to him:

"I must go," he said, over his shoulder; and, leaving the two opponents thus confronting each other, he walked away, as if he had been summoned to perform some one of his duties as master of the house.

Sallenauve did not propose to appear like a boarding-school miss, dismayed at the idea of being left alone with a *gentleman;* as the meeting had come about, he resolved to submit to it with good grace, and, by way of beginning the conversation, he asked whether the ministry had prepared a large amount of proposed legislation in anticipation of the session which was to open in a few days.

"Very little," the minister replied. "To speak frankly, we do not expect to remain in office; we ordered an election, because the press had finally succeeded in throwing public opinion into such utter confusion, that it became our constitutional duty to compel it to reconstitute itself and reckon with itself, by consulting it; but, in all seriousness, we do not consider that the test resulted favorably to us, and our victory, we may as well confess it, caught us napping."

"You acted like the peasant who believed that the end of the world was coming, so did not think it worth while to sow his field," said Sallenauve, with a laugh.

"Oh! to our minds," said Rastignac, modestly, "our retirement from office is not the end of the world. We believe that there are other people to come after us, and plenty of them, too, who are quite capable of governing; but, as we expected to give only a very small number of performances in the one-night town called office, we did not unpack our scenery or our costumes. However, the session is not likely to be a business session, in any sense;

the question is now fairly stated between what is called the château, personal influence, and the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy. This question will naturally arise on the vote for the secret-service fund. When it has been decided in one way or another, when the Budget and some laws of secondary interest have been voted, Parliament will have done its work well; for it will have put an end to a disastrous struggle, and the country will know, once for all, to which of the two powers it can most surely look for the development of its prosperity."

"And do you believe," asked Sallenauve, "that that question is a useful one to bring up in a well-balanced government?"

"But we are not the ones who have brought it up," said Rastignac; "it is born of circumstances, perhaps, and in large measure of the impatience of some ambitious men, and also of party tactics."

"So that, in your opinion, monsieur le ministre, one of the opposing parties is guilty of nothing and has nothing whatever to reproach itself with?"

"You are a republican," replied Rastignac, "and consequently an *à priori* enemy of the dynasty; I should waste my time, I fancy, in trying to rearrange your ideas on the subject of the policy for which you blame it."

"You are mistaken," said the deputy, "a republican in theory, by accident, *in futuro*, I have no hatred for the reigning dynasty; indeed, I think that, in its beplumed past, if I may so express myself, of royal alliances and revolution, there was everything that was necessary to satisfy the instincts, at once liberal and monarchical, of the country; but you would have much difficulty in persuading me that the present occupant of the throne does not represent those extreme ideas on the subject of personal influence which eventually undermine, pervert, and destroy the best as well as the strongest institutions."

"Yes," said Rastignac, ironically, "and you would save them with the famous maxim of the deputy from Sancerre: 'The king reigns and does not govern!'"

Whether because he was tired of talking on his feet, or because he wished to show that he was perfectly at ease as he extricated himself from the trap which had evidently been set for him, Sallenauve, before replying, drew up a chair for the minister and took a seat himself.

"Will you allow me, monsieur," he said, "to cite the example of a different course of conduct, that of a prince who was not considered over-indifferent to the prerogatives of his crown, and who was not very ignorant, either, of the mechanism of the constitution: in the first place, like the reigning king, he was not ignorant upon any subject, and in the second place, because he himself imported that mechanism into our country?"

"You mean Louis XVIII.," said Rastignac, "or, as the newspapers say, 'the illustrious author of the Charter?'"

"Exactly," was the reply; "would you do me the honor to tell me where he died?"

"*Parbleu!* at the Tuileries."

"And his successor?"

"In exile!—Oh! I see what you are coming at!"

"In truth, my conclusion is not hard to guess; but, monsieur le ministre, have you considered the logical deduction from that royal existence, for which, in my heart, I entertain the most absolute respect? Louis XVIII. was not a citizen king. He granted his Charter, but did not consent to it; born nearer the crown than the prince to whose deplorable tendency I have adverted, he was likely to share more fully the ideas, the prejudices, the infatuations of the court; in his personal appearance he was ridiculous, which is a fatal defect in France; he had to endure all the vexations of a new régime, he succeeded a government which had intoxicated the country with that seductive golden vapor called glory; and, even if he was not brought back by foreigners, he returned to the throne upon the heels of an invasion by armed Europe. Now shall I tell you why, notwithstanding all these original sins and notwithstanding the never-ending conspiracy against his government, he was allowed to die in peace under his canopy at the Tuileries?"

"Because he was constitutional?" queried Rastignac, with a slight shrug; "but can you say that we are not?"

"According to the letter, yes; in spirit, no. When Louis XVIII. gave his confidence to a minister, he gave it absolutely, did not haggle with him, but played his game to the best of his ability—witness the famous ordinance of the 5th of September, and the dissolution of the *introuvable** Chamber, which was more royalist than himself, a thing that he had the good sense not to desire. Later, a change in public opinion overturned the minister who had urged that course upon him; the minister was his favorite, his child, as he called him. No matter: bowing to a constitutional necessity, after swathing him in ribbons and titles, everything that can help to deaden the pain of a fall, he boldly sent him to a foreign country; he dug no pitfalls, nor did he watch for or manufacture opportunities to restore that minister to power surreptitiously; and he never held office again."

"For a man who does not hate us," said Rastignac, "you treat us harshly; we seem to be, in your opinion, almost traitors to the constitutional compact, and our policy, which you consider ambiguous and tortuous, suggests a distant resemblance in certain respects to Monsieur Doublemain, the clerk in *Le Mariage de Figaro*."

"I should not wish to assert," rejoined Sallenauve, "that the evil goes so deep or dates back so far; perhaps *we are* simply a *faiseur*, the word being understood, of course, in the sense of a man who likes to be doing something, to have a finger in every pie."

---

* A name given to the Chamber of Deputies of 1815, which distinguished itself by its exaggerated royalism.—LITTRÉ.

"But, monsieur, suppose we are the most adroit politician in the kingdom?"

"It does not follow, monsieur le ministre, that our kingdom, which is the whole people, may not sometimes have the good fortune to be as clever as we."

"*Parbleu!*" said Rastignac, in the tone that seems to denote a culminating point in a conversation, "I would like to see a dream of mine come true."

"What is the dream?" queried Sallenauve.

"To see you in a hand-to-hand struggle with this so-called mischief-making adroitness, of which you seem to have so poor an opinion."

"You know, monsieur le ministre, that three-fourths of one's life are passed in dreaming of the impossible."

"Impossible, why? would you be the first member of the opposition to be seen at the Tuileries? and a public invitation to dinner, with no attempt at concealment, which by giving you a closer view of someone whom you judge unjustly at a distance—"

"I should have the honor to decline," said Sallenauve, interrupting him.

And he emphasized his *I should have the honor* in such a way as to give the phrase its full significance.

"That is the way with all you people of the opposition!" cried the minister; "you do not want to inform yourselves when opportunity offers, or, perhaps I ought to say, you cannot."

"Do you consider yourself very fully informed, monsieur le ministre, when you pass a drug-store at night, and your eyes are dazzled by a beam from one of those enormous bottles which seem to have been invented to make people blind?"

"It is not our beams that frighten you, but the dark lantern of your party making its rounds."

"There may be some truth in what you say, monsieur le ministre; a party and the man who has aspired to the honor of representing it are, after all, like a man and wife, who must be mutually considerate and frank and loyal, in fact as well as in form, in order to live happily together."

"Well, try to be moderate; your dream is even more impossible of realization than mine, and you will soon have news to tell me of the consideration shown by your better half."

"If there is one misfortune which I ought to anticipate more than any other, it is surely that."

"You think so! and that, with the exalted and generous sentiments which your whole personality indicates, you will remain indifferent even to calumny, which may be already sharpening its claws."

"Have not you yourself sometimes felt its venom, monsieur le ministre; and have you turned aside from your path on that account?"

"But," said Rastignac confidentially, lowering his voice, "suppose I should tell you that I have already had to ward off some officious busybodies who offer to stir up certain matters in your private life which, simply because they are not in so bright a light as the rest, have seemed to them wonderfully well adapted for arranging an ambuscade!"

"I do not thank you, monsieur le ministre, for the honor you have done me in receiving with contempt the suggestions of these officious persons, who belong neither to my party nor to yours, who belong to no party save that of their shameless greed and their selfish interests; but, even if the impossible had happened and they had found some credit with you, pray believe that the compact I have made with my conscience could have been in no wise affected thereby."

"But just consider the elements that go to make up your party: a conglomeration of defeated ambitions, of brutal covetousness, of imitators of '93, of despots disguised as lovers of liberty."

"My party has nothing and seeks to obtain something; yours is called the conservative party, and the name is appropriate, its principal care being to retain power, offices, wealth, in a word, everything that it now holds; but in reality, monsieur, the cooking is the same, and we must eat of it and not simply watch the process, for, as La Bruyère has said: 'If you see the banquet elsewhere than upon a well-served table, what filth! What disgusting stuff!'"

"At all events, monsieur, we are not a *cul-de-sac*, we lead to something. The more eminent you are in character and intelligence, the less likely you are to be allowed to rise, with your little band of democrats in your train, for its accession to power would not mean a change of politics, but a revolution."

"But who has told you that I have any wish to attain power?"

"What! march with no goal in view! Why,

development of the faculties to a certain degree does not simply give a man a right to aspire to the direction of public affairs, it makes it his duty."

"And to keep an eye upon those who do direct them is also a useful and, I may add, a most engrossing occupation."

"You do not imagine, monsieur," said Rastignac, good-naturedly, "that I would have taken so much trouble to put myself in the right with Beauvisage; indeed, to tell the truth, he would have made the task less difficult."

"From the acquaintance that chance has brought about," said Sallenauve, "this advantage at least will result, that we shall be known to each other, and that our future meetings will necessarily be courteous,—a state of things which in no way impairs the strength of our respective convictions."

"Then I shall say to the king, for I was specially commissioned by his august—"

Rastignac was not able to finish his sentence, in which he fired his last cartridge, so to speak; as the orchestra began to play the refrain of a quadrille, Naïs ran up and said, with coquettish courtesy:

"Monsieur le ministre, I am very sorry, but you have taken my partner and you must give him back to me; his name is down for the eleventh contradance, and, when I miss a number, it causes terrible confusion."

"With your permission, monsieur?" said Sallenauve, laughingly. "I am not a very fierce republican, you see."

And he followed Naïs, who led him away, clinging to his hand.

Madame de l'Estorade had had a very considerate thought: realizing how much Sallenauve's good-natured compliance with Naïs's whim might cost his gravity, she had arranged to have several *papas* and *mammas* stand up with him in the contra-dance into which he had allowed himself to be lured; and she herself, with the young Scotchman with the blank paper, who was quite capable of compromising her, although she did not suspect it, was, to use the technical term, her daughter's *vis-à-vis*. Naïs was radiant with pride and joy; when, in one of the figures of the quadrille, she was called upon to take her mother's hand, she said, as she pressed it passionately:

"Poor mamma, except for *him*, you wouldn't have me here!"

The suddenness and form of that reminder made such a deep impression on Madame de l'Estorade that she was seized with the same nervous trembling that she had experienced at the time of the accident to her daughter, and she was obliged to sit down. Sallenauve, Naïs, and Madame de Camps, noticing her change of color, ran to her to ask if she were ill.

"It is nothing," she replied, addressing her words to Sallenauve; "this child reminded me of our immense obligations to you: '*Except for him*,' it occurred to her to say to me, 'you would not have me here, poor mamma!' And, in very truth, monsieur, but for your noble courage, where would the child be to-day?"

"Come, come, be calm!" said Madame de Camps, noticing a spasmodic, convulsive note in her friend's voice; "is it sensible to get into such a state on account of what a little girl says?"

"She is more consistent than we," rejoined Madame de l'Estorade, holding out her arms to Naïs, who repeated: "Come, mamma, be calm!"—"There is no one in the world whom she places above her rescuer; while as for her father and myself, we have hardly made him understand our gratitude."

"But you have overwhelmed me, madame," said Sallenauve, politely.

"Overwhelmed?" said Naïs, shaking her pretty head with a doubtful air. "If anyone saved my daughter, I would treat him very differently!"

"Naïs," said Madame de Camps, sternly, "children should listen and say nothing, when their opinion is not asked."

"What's the matter?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, who joined the group at that moment.

"Nothing," said Madame de Camps, "Renée was a little dizzy while dancing."

"Has it passed off?"

"Yes; I am all right again," replied Madame de l'Estorade.

"Then come and say good-night to Madame de Rastignac, who is ready to go."

In his eagerness to return to the minister's wife, Monsieur de l'Estorade did not think of offering his arm to his own wife. Sallenauve was more considerate. As they walked along together, preceded by her husband, who could not hear her, Madame de l'Estorade said:

"You had a long talk with Monsieur de Rastignac; of course he tried to seduce you in some way?"

"Do you imagine that he succeeded?" replied Sallenauve.

"No, but such attempts at inveigling are always disagreeable; I beg you to believe that I was not in the plot. I am not such a ferocious ministerialist as my husband."

"Nor am I such a ferocious revolutionist as people seem to imagine."

"I trust that these tiresome politics, which will place you at variance with Monsieur de l'Estorade more than once, will not cause you to loathe the idea of being numbered among our friends."

"It is an honor, madame, in which I am only too fortunate."

"Pleasure, not honor, is what you must find in it!" said Madame de l'Estorade, earnestly. "I will say with Naïs: 'If I had saved anyone's daughter, I would treat that person less ceremoniously.'"

With that, and without awaiting a reply, she hastily drew her arm from Sallenauve's, and left him somewhat surprised at the tone in which she had spoken. Having seen how implicitly Madame de l'Estorade was accustomed to follow the advice, perhaps more witty than sagacious, of Madame Octave de Camps, our readers probably will not be so much surprised. Indeed, it is impossible that they should not long since have detected that the unsusceptible countess was attracted toward Sallenauve, not only as her daughter's rescuer, but as the man who had forced himself upon her notice under such strange and romantic circumstances. No one else assuredly has been deceived, as she has, by that sense of security which the certainty of Sallenauve's absolute indifference had at last inspired in her. The certainty that she was not coveted by him was, in fact, the only trap in which she could have been caught; as a declared gallant, he would have been a thousand times less dangerous. In reality, Madame de l'Estorade was far from being one of those impassive creatures who are incapable of any deep affection outside of their family. Her beauty was almost of the Spanish type, and she had eyes of which her friend Louise de Chaulieu used to say in jest that they ripened the peaches when she looked at them ; her coldness was not what the doctors call *congenial*, it was an acquired temperament. Married for family reasons to a man whose mental insufficiency we have already noticed, reversing a famous opera-comique axiom, she had turned pity into love, and, by virtue of a sort of atrophy of the heart which she had succeeded in bringing upon herself, she had been able, without tripping, to make Monsieur de l'Estorade the happiest of husbands down to the critical time at which we have arrived. To the same end she had exalted the sentiment of maternity to an almost incredible height, and by that means had found a way to deceive other instinctive sentiments; but in the success with which she had thus far accomplished her difficult task, we must not omit to mention as a most important element *the circumstance* of Louise de Chaulieu. To her the poor mad creature had been the drunken slave of whom the Spartans made a living lesson for their children, and a sort of wager had been tacitly entered into by the two friends. Louise de Chaulieu having assumed the rôle of unbridled passion, Madame de l'Estorade took that of superior wisdom, and, in order to win the wager, she achieved prodigies of common-sense and prudence, which, without that stimulus, would perhaps have cost her much more. At the age she had now attained, and with her long-standing habit of mastering her emotions, it may be imagined that, if she had seen this love, against which she had preached so much, coming toward her on the high road, she would at once have recognized it and would have turned it pitilessly away; but a man who had no feeling for her, even though she fulfilled his ideal of beauty, and who perhaps loved elsewhere; a man who had snatched her daughter from the jaws of death and claimed no reward; who was grave and serious and engrossed by an absorbing enterprise—how could she look upon such a man as formidable, when he arrived thus, by a cross-road, and how could she refuse to bestow upon him, at the first impulse, the lukewarm sentiment of friendship?

Meanwhile, this is what was taking place on the road to Ville-d'Avray, whither Sallenauve, guided by his anxiety concerning his friend, had determined to return, despite the lateness of the hour.

Upon going over in his mind the incidents of the evening, the deputy, as may be imagined, was not likely to devote much attention either to Rastignac's overture or to Naïs's passionate expressions, which, at the worst, could do no more than make him ridiculous; but it was not so with Madame de l'Estorade's outburst of heartfelt gratitude, and he gave much thought to that gratitude, which was so warmly expressed. Although he had hardly had reason to complain of the countess's manner toward him, Sallenauve had never considered that her regard for him was particularly warm, and he had judged her in accordance with the generally received opinion of her disposition and character. He had seen her, therefore, simply a woman of very superior intellect, but completely paralyzed so far as the heart was concerned, thanks to the absorbing and exclusive love for her children that possessed her. "The *glacial* Madame de l'Estorade," he had written once to Marie-Gaston; and it was doubtful if he had ever thought of making her his friend in the masculine acceptation of the word. Moreover, it was not simply with reference to Madame de l'Estorade, but with reference to her husband as well, that Sallenauve had conceived doubts concerning the future and the probable duration of his acquaintance with them. "Politics will make trouble between us," he had often said to himself, and the reader may remember another of his letters in which he looked forward to that conclusion with considerable bitterness. So that when Madame de l'Estorade seemed to encourage him in such an outspoken way to place himself upon a footing of more cordial friendliness with her, the thing that had astonished him more than all else was the care she took to make a very sharp distinction between her husband's probable course and her own. To say, with the emotion that was evident in her voice, those very flattering words: "I trust that these tiresome politics will not make you loathe the idea of being numbered among our friends," the woman who let them fall from her mouth must assuredly, thought Sallenauve, have more heart than she is usually credited with having, and it did not seem to him that he ought to take that *declaration of friendship* for a mere conventionality, or for the thoughtless expression of an ephemeral, temporary impulse, like the nervous attack which was its starting-point.

Having thus analyzed his good fortune, the statesman, with a view to returning Madame de l'Estorade's courtesy, so to speak, did not disdain to resort to a remark far from consistent, it must be confessed, with his customary gravity and with certain passages of his life. He remembered that at Rome he had seen Mademoiselle de Lanty dance more than once, and, comparing the original with the copy, he decided, not without some pleasure in the thought, that, despite the difference in their ages, the younger woman had not impressed him as having a more maidenly air, or as producing a more refined and attractive effect. At this point, would not those thoughtful readers, who have long suspected that these two natures, so self-restrained and apparently so well-guarded by their respective past lives, might eventually find their hearts in closer contact—would they not have reason to note distinct progress in their hitherto scarcely perceptible gravitation toward each other? It was, if you please, solely in deference to Madame de Camps's advice that Madame de l'Estorade had been led to change her severe manner so completely; but, unless we admit the existence of something resembling the sentiment at which her friend had hinted, can we believe that she would have imparted such extraordinary animation to the manifestation of that inspired kindliness, and that her nerves would have been wrought up to such a state of tension by a few harmless words from her daughter?

For his part, even before he has taken possession of the privileged position which has been put before him and offered to him with such utter unreserve, monsieur le député is beguiled into bestowing upon exterior charms a degree of attention which is quite useless at all events, if not very imprudent, for in theory Madame de Camps's text was true: "Friendship between man and woman is neither an impossible illusion nor a *yawning* abyss." But in practice, we must observe that that enticing sentiment often becomes a narrow bridge thrown over a mountain torrent without fixed supports on the bank, and in order to pass safely across, it is of the utmost importance that both parties should retain their self-possession, should have nerves less sensitive than Madame de l'Estorade's, and should not look to right or left as our statesman was doing. It seems, then, that there is a conclusion to be drawn from all these observations, subtle as they may appear, and the conclusion would seem to be an impending rise in temperature between those two sympathies, hitherto so negative and so slow to make themselves manifest. But, upon arriving at Ville-d'Avray, Sallenauve was about to find himself confronted by a strange state of affairs; and who does not know how frequently events run counter to our wishes and defeat our plans, however far advanced?

Sallenauve did not err in feeling grave anxiety concerning his friend's mental condition.

When Marie-Gaston, almost immediately after his wife's death, suddenly left the spot where their cruel separation had taken place, he would, if he had been wise, have made himself a solemn promise never to look upon it again. Nature and the ordering of Providence have decreed that, in presence of the stern reality of death, they whom it smites in the persons of those dear to them, when they accept their fate with the resignation which should be expected from everybody in relation to the execution of every necessary law, do not long suffer the same intense anguish as at the beginning. Rousseau says, in his famous letter against *suicide:* "Sadness, ennui, regret, despair, are sorrows of brief duration, which never take root in the heart, and experience always proves the falsity of the feeling of bitterness which makes us look upon our suffering as everlasting.''

But that ceases to be true in the case of those imprudent ones who, wishing to escape the first pang, try to avoid it by flight or by some violent distraction. All mental suffering is a species of disease, which, having time for its specific remedy, runs its course and disappears of itself, like everything that is violent. On the other hand, if, instead of allowing it to consume itself slowly and on the spot, you quicken the flame by movement or by extreme remedies, you embarrass the action of nature; you deprive yourself of the benefit of the partial forgetfulness promised to those who are content to endure their suffering, and you finally transform an acute disease, whose salutary paroxysms you have interrupted, into a chronic malady, whose ravages are none the less profound because they are disguised. The imagination thereupon takes a hand in the game with the heart, and as the action of the latter is by its nature limited, while the other is infinite, it is impossible to calculate the vehemence of the emotions which may assail a man under its empire, soon, in its frenzy, to become predominant.

As he walked about the place where, after two years' absence, he had fancied that he should find naught but the melancholy consequent upon his memories, Marie-Gaston was unable to take a step, to rest his eyes upon a single object, that all his days of happiness and the sad catastrophe that had marked their close did not come thronging all at once into his mind. In the flowers his wife had loved, in those smooth lawns, in the trees renewing their verdure in the mild May breeze, while she who had created all that loveliness lay beneath the cold ground, in all the beautiful things assembled with unsparing hand to adorn that marvellous nest of his love, there was, for the absent one who dared to return and defy its dangerous atmosphere, a sort of chorus of lamentation, a long wail of grief. Alarmed half-way by the vertigo of sorrow that had attacked him, Marie-Gaston, as Sallenauve observed, had not dared to ascend the last step of his Calvary. In a distant country he had coldly busied himself in preparing designs for the monument which he had dreamed of erecting, with his friend's assistance, over the mortal remains of his beloved Louise, and now he could not make up his mind to go and do them reverent homage in the village cemetery in which they had been laid. Anything therefore might be feared from a grief which, instead of being allayed by the hand of time, grew more and more intense by its very duration, in which it seemed to have dipped its point anew, so to speak.

And so Sallenauve approached the gloomy house, ceasing to think of himself and of the joys or disappointments which the future might have in store for him, he felt more than ever oppressed by a vague feeling of uneasiness, and two or three times he told the coachman to urge his horses and hasten his arrival.

The door was opened by Philippe, the old servant who was major-domo of the house in the days of Madame Marie-Gaston.

"How is your master?" Sallenauve asked him.

"Gone, monsieur!"

"What! gone?"

"Yes, monsieur, with the Englishman whom monsieur left with him not long ago."

"But without leaving any word for me or telling you where they were going?"

"After dinner, which passed off quietly, monsieur suddenly gave orders to have a few clothes put in a trunk; he himself took a hand in the packing. Meanwhile, the Englishman, after saying that he was going into the park to smoke a cigar, mysteriously asked me where he could go to write a letter, out of monsieur's sight. I took him to my room, not daring to ask him any questions as to where they were going, for I never saw anybody who seemed less communicative or less approachable. When the letter was finished, everything was ready; thereupon, without a word of explanation to me, the two gentlemen entered the Englishman's carriage, and I heard him say to the coachman: 'To Paris!'"

"But the letter?" said Sallenauve.

"It was addressed to you, monsieur, and the Englishman handed it to me secretly, as he wrote it."

"Give it to me, my dear man!" said Sallenauve, eagerly; and without leaving the reception-room where he had stopped to question Philippe, he began to read the letter with much agitation.

When he had read it through, his face seemed to Philippe to denote intense anxiety.

"Tell them not to unharness my horse," he said.

And he read the letter a second time.

"At what time did they start?" he asked, when the old servant returned after executing his order.

"About nine o'clock."

"Three hours' start," said the deputy to himself, glancing at his watch, which marked a few minutes after midnight.

He went out to the carriage which was waiting. As he stepped in, the major-domo mustered courage to ask:

"Monsieur found no bad news in the letter?"

"No, but your master may be absent some time; be careful to keep the house in order."

Then, imitating the two travellers who had preceded him, he said to the coachman:

"To Paris!"

*

The next morning, at quite an early hour, Monsieur de l'Estorade was in his study engaged in a strange occupation. It will be remembered that, on the day that Sallenauve sent him the statuette of Madame de l'Estorade, he had been unable to find a place where it would be in a satisfactory light. As soon as Rastignac had hinted to him that his relations with the sculptor-deputy might injure his standing at court, he had discovered that he agreed with his son Armand that the artist had given Madame de l'Estorade a *grisette* air; but, now that Sallenauve, by his resistance to the ministerial allurements, had taken his stand as an implacable foe to the government, his statuette, whose freshness and general aspect the dust had unquestionably impaired, no longer seemed to the peer of France an object deserving to be placed on exhibition, and the worthy man was now endeavoring to find some out-of-the-way corner, in which, without making himself ridiculous by banishing it altogether, he could place it out of the range of his visitors' vision, and thereby avoid the necessity of telling the artist's name, which everybody asked him. He was perched therefore on the highest step of a library ladder, with the sculptor's gift in his hands, preparing to place it on top of a closet. There the unhappy statue would be relegated to the companionship of a curlew and a cormorant slain by Armand during his last vacation. They were the young collegian's first hunting trophies, and, as such, paternal gratification had bestowed upon them the honor of being stuffed. At that juncture Lucas threw open the door of the study, and announced:

"Monsieur Philippe."

The old major-domo's advanced age and the confidential position he occupied in Marie-Gaston's household seemed to the factotum of the L'Estorade establishment to justify the *monsieur*, a courtesy which he would be expected to reciprocate, of course.

Descending from his elevation, the peer of France asked Philippe what brought him there, and whether there was anything new at Ville-d'Avray. The old servant told him of his master's strange departure, followed by the no less strange departure of Sallenauve, as if he were on the track of a kidnapped girl.

"This morning," he added, "as I was putting monsieur's room to rights, a letter addressed to madame la comtesse fell from a book. As it was sealed and all ready to be sent, I thought that monsieur, in the hurry of his preparations, had forgotten to give it to me to put in the mail. At all events, I have brought it; perhaps madame la comtesse may find in it some explanation of this unexpected journey, which I dreamed about all night long."

Monsieur de l'Estorade took the letter.

"Three black seals!" he said, turning it over.

"It isn't the color that surprises me," said

Philippe, "Monsieur has never left off mourning since madame's death; but I confess that the three seals seemed very peculiar to me."

"Very well," said the peer of France, "I will hand the letter to my wife."

"If there should be anything in it that would set my mind at rest about monsieur," said Philippe, "would monsieur le comte be kind enough to send me word?"

"You may rely upon it, my dear fellow—*au revoir.*"

"I ask monsieur le comte's pardon for having an opinion," continued the major-domo, not accepting his dismissal, "but does not monsieur le comte think that he would do better to ascertain the contents of the letter so that he could prepare madame la comtesse in case it should contain any bad news?"

"What! do you suppose—?" Monsieur de l'Estorade began, but he did not finish the sentence.

"I do not know, but monsieur was very much depressed the last few days."

"To break the seal of a letter that is not addressed to you is always a very serious matter," observed the president of the Cour des Comptes. "But this is even worse; this letter is addressed to my wife, but, in fact, it was never sent to her, so that it is really a very embarrassing question—"

"But suppose that, by reading it, you could prevent a disaster!"

"True; that is just what makes me hesitate."

Madame de l'Estorade solved the question by entering the room. Lucas had advised her of Philippe's arrival.

"What is the matter?" she asked, with anxious interest.

The apprehension Sallenauve had exhibited the previous evening returned vividly to her mind.

After the major-domo had repeated the story he had already told to Monsieur de l'Estorade, she did not hesitate to break the seals.

"I know so much now," she said to her husband, who attempted to persuade her not to do it, "that the most painful of certainties would be preferable to remaining in doubt."

Whatever may have been the contents of that ominous epistle, they cast no reflection on the countess's face.

"You say," she asked Philippe, "that your master went away with this Englishman, without apparently yielding to any forcible measures?"

"Far from it, madame; he seemed, on the contrary, to be rather cheerful."

"Well, there is nothing that need alarm us. This letter was written a long time ago, and, notwithstanding its three black seals, it has no sort of significance to-day."

Philippe bowed and left the room.

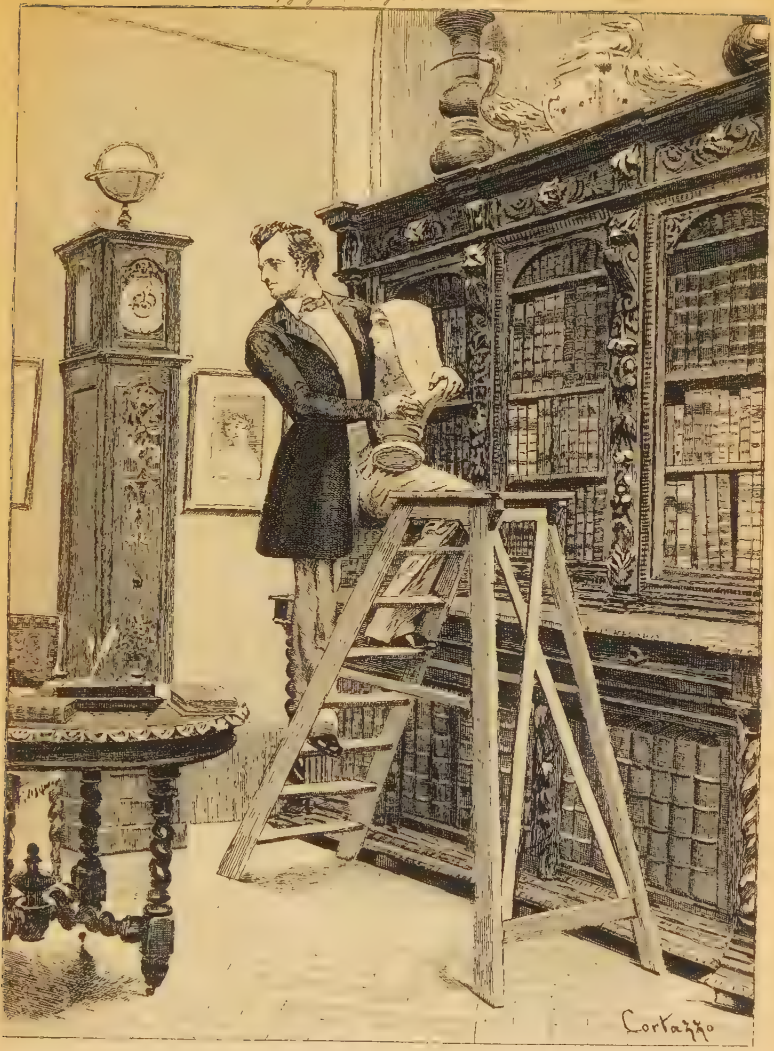
"What does he say to you?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, when he and his wife were alone.

He put out his hand to take the letter which his wife still held.

THE BUST OF MME. DE L'ESTORADE

He was perched therefore on the highest step of a library ladder, with the sculptor's gift in his hands, preparing to place it on top of a closet. There the unhappy statue would be relegated to the companionship of a curlew and a cormorant slain by Armand during the last vacation.

Copyright 1898 by G. Ba[illegible]



"No, don't read it," said the countess, drawing it away.

"Why not?"

"It would pain you. It was quite enough for me to have had the emotion of reading it, and in that old servant's presence too, so that I had to restrain my feelings."

"Does it disclose a project of suicide?"

Madame de l'Estorade bent her head in assent, without speaking.

"A plan to be executed immediately?"

"The letter is dated yesterday morning, and, according to all appearances, but for the providential intervention of this stranger, the poor fellow would have accomplished his melancholy purpose last evening, during Monsieur de Sallenauve's absence."

"The stranger carried him away, doubtless, in order to block his fatal project; after this he will not lose sight of him."

"We can also rely upon the intervention of Monsieur de Sallenauve, who has probably overtaken them," said Madame de l'Estorade.

"Then there is nothing so very terrible in the letter after all," observed her husband.

And he tried once more to obtain possession of it.

"But I entreat you not to read it!" said Madame de l'Estorade, drawing back her hand. "Why do you seek to create painful emotions? It is not simply the suggestion of suicide, but our unhappy friend betrays complete mental derangement."

At that moment a succession of piercing shrieks uttered by René, the youngest of her children, cast Madame de l'Estorade into one of those paroxysms of maternal excitement which she was, of all mothers, the least capable of controlling.

"Great Heaven! what has happened?" she cried, rushing from the study.

Monsieur de l'Estorade, less prompt to take fright, contented himself by going to the door and asking a servant what had happened.

"It is nothing, monsieur le comte," was the reply; "Monsieur René, in trying to close a drawer, jammed the end of his finger."

The peer of France did not feel called upon to visit the scene of the *disaster;* he knew that, in such emergencies, he must allow his wife's excessive maternal solicitude to have free play, on pain of being sharply snubbed. As he walked back to his desk, he felt a paper under his foot; it was the famous letter, which Madame de l'Estorade had dropped as she ran, and had failed to notice as it fell to the floor. Opportunity, and a sort of fatality which often seems to guide the course of human events, impelling him, Monsieur de l'Estorade, who had been unable to understand his wife's reluctance, made haste to satisfy his curiosity. Marie-Gaston wrote as follows:

"MADAME,

"This letter will seem to you less entertaining than those I wrote you from Arcis-sur-Aube. You must not, however, be alarmed at the resolution which I announce to you. I am simply going to join my wife, from whom I have been separated too long, and to-night, shortly after midnight, I shall be united to her once more, never to leave her. You have said to yourselves, I doubt not, you and Sallenauve, that I was acting very strangely in neglecting to visit her grave; that is a remark that two of my servants made the other day, when they did not know that I was listening. I should have been a great fool truly to go to that cemetery and stare at a great stone which would have said nothing at all to me, when every night, as the clock strikes twelve, I hear a little tap on my chamber door, which I open at once to admit our dear Louise, who has not changed at all, but who seems to me, on the contrary, stouter and improved in every way. She had great difficulty in obtaining permission from Marie, queen of the angels, for me to be discharged from earth; but last night she brought me my discharge in proper form, sealed with the great seal of green wax, and at the same time she handed me a little phial of hydrocyanic acid. A single drop puts you to sleep, and when you wake you are on the other side. Louise also gave me a message for you: I am to say to you that Monsieur de l'Estorade has a disease of the liver, that he cannot live long, and that, after his death, you must marry Sallenauve, because women are always united, *over yonder*, to the husbands they really love, and that our little party of four will be much more agreeable to her with you and myself and Sallenauve, than with your Monsieur de l'Estorade, who is deathly tiresome and whom you married with regret.

"Having done my errand, it only remains for me, madame, to wish that you may have patience for the time you have still to pass on earth, and to subscribe myself your most affectionate and devoted servant."

If, after reading this letter, it had occurred to Monsieur de l'Estorade to look at himself in the mirror, he would have realized, by the sudden distortion of his features, the terrible, deadly blow that he had dealt himself by his ill-timed curiosity. His heart, his mind, his self-esteem, had undergone the same violent shock, and the very apparent insanity manifested in the sort of prophecy of which he was the subject, made it appear to him only the more redoubtable. Persuading himself, like the Mussulmans, that all madmen are endowed with a species of second sight, he looked upon himself as lost, he at once felt an excruciating pain in the region of his diseased liver, and was seized with a paroxysm of jealous hatred of Sallenauve, his designated successor, which made any friendly relations between them impossible thenceforth. But, at the same time, as he was conscious that the feeling that had taken possession of him was utterly absurd and devoid of reason, he was afraid that its existence might be suspected, and with the instinct of secrecy which always leads invalids when struck to the heart to conceal their wound with great care, he gave his mind to the best method of concealing from his wife the indiscreet act which had cast a shadow over the rest of his days. It would have seemed most improbable that he should have failed to notice the ill-omened paper if it had fallen directly under his eye, and the transition from that thought to the suspicion that he had made himself acquainted with its contents was too simple. He left his seat, therefore, opened his study-door noiselessly, and, after making sure that there was nobody in the salon adjoining, he stole on tiptoe to the farther end of that room and dropped the letter, so that Madame de l'Estorade would suppose that she had let it fall there; then, like a schoolboy, who has just done something wrong and seeks to throw the usher off the scent by diligent application to his books, he hastily scattered over his desk the documents composing a voluminous file from the Cour des Comptes, so that he might seem to be immersed in figures when his wife should return. It is needless to add that he listened intently to hear if any other than Madame de l'Estorade entered the salon where he had laid his snare; in that case he would have intervened at once to prevent any indiscreet eyes from looking upon that paper which contained such strange secrets.

Madame de l'Estorade's voice, in conversation with some person, and her appearance soon after in the study with Monsieur Octave de Camps, assured him of the success of his stratagem. He walked forward so far to greet his visitor that he could look through the open door at the spot where he had placed the letter. Not only was it no longer there, but he surprised a gesture by which Madame de l'Estorade satisfied herself that she had bestowed it safely in her *peignoir*, in the place where Louis XIII. did not dare to follow Mademoiselle d'Hautefort's secrets.

"I have come, my dear fellow," said Monsieur de Camps, "to ask you to go with me to Rastignac's, as we agreed last evening."

"Very good!" said the peer of France, arranging his papers with a feverish haste that did not indicate a normal condition of the mind.

"Aren't you well?" inquired Madame de l'Estorade, who knew her husband too perfectly by heart not to be impressed by the abnormal external stupidity which she observed in him at that moment; at the same time she looked in his face and noticed the great change that had taken place there.

"Why, you don't seem to be in first-rate condition, that's a fact," said Monsieur de Camps; "we will postpone this call, if you prefer?"

"By no means," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade; "I have been very busy with this work, and I need a change. What made René shriek so?" he added, addressing his wife, whose scrutiny he felt resting upon him, like a heavy weight.

"A *bobo*," replied Madame de l'Estorade, without removing her eyes from his face.

"Well, my dear fellow," said the peer of France, assuming the most unconcerned air he could command, "I will go and change my coat, and then I am at your service."

"Doesn't it seem to you that Monsieur de l'Estorade looks very sick this morning?" the countess asked Monsieur de Camps, when they were alone.

"As I was saying just now, there is something strange about him. But his explanation is very plausible. We took him by surprise in the heat of his labors. This office life is a bad business; I have never been so well as since I bought the iron works against which you have such a grudge."

"Ah! yes," said Madame de l'Estorade, with a deep sigh, "he ought to have more exercise, a more active life, for, there is no doubt about it, he has an incipient disease of the liver."

"Because his skin is yellow? He has always been like that since I have known him."

"Oh! monsieur, I am not mistaken. There is something very seriously wrong with him, and you can do me a great favor—"

"Madame, I am always at your service."

"When Monsieur de l'Estorade returns, let us talk about the little bruise René has just given his finger. Tell me that such accidents, if neglected, may have serious results; that gangrene has been known to ensue, so that amputation has become necessary. In that way I shall have an excuse for sending for Doctor Bianchon."

"I will gladly do it," replied Monsieur de Camps; "it doesn't seem to me that a physician's advice is very necessary, but if it will set your mind at rest—"

At that moment Monsieur de l'Estorade reappeared. His face had almost recovered its usual aspect, but he exhaled a powerful odor of *eau de mélisse des Carmes*, which indicated that he had been obliged to have recourse to that cordial to straighten himself out. Monsieur de Camps played his rôle of Doctor Tant-Pis to perfection; as to Madame de l'Estorade, she had no need to simulate a keen anxiety; her acting was entirely with reference to the object of that anxiety.

"My dear," she said to her husband, after the iron-master's medical disquisition, "I beg you, call to see Doctor Bianchon."

"Nonsense!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, shrugging his shoulders; "the idea of bothering a man as busy as he is for what you yourself called a *bobo!*"

"If you will not go, I shall send Lucas. Monsieur de Camps has upset me completely."

"If it is your pleasure to be ridiculous," said the peer of France, sharply, "I have no way of preventing you; but I will remind you of one thing, and that is that, when you call doctors for trifles, you fail to get them in serious cases."

"So you won't go to the doctor?"

"Indeed I will not; and, if I had the honor to be of any account in my own house, I would forbid your sending anybody in my place."

"You are the master, my dear, and as you refuse my request with so much warmth, we will say no more about it; I will devour my anxiety."

"Are you coming, De Camps?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "for, if this continues, she will tell me soon to go and order the child's funeral."

"But, my dear," said the countess, taking his hand, "are you ill that you say such horrible things in cold blood? I recognize neither your usual patience with my petty maternal troubles, nor the exquisite courtesy which you pride yourself upon showing to everybody, your wife included."

"True," retorted Monsieur de l'Estorade, becoming more excited instead of more tranquil under this reproof, so just and at the same time so amiable; "but your maternal affection is turning to monomania, and you make life unendurable to everybody except your children. What the devil! if they are your children, I am their father, and although I am not worshipped as they are, I have at least the right to demand that my house shall not be made uninhabitable!"

While Monsieur de l'Estorade was pronouncing this tirade, striding up and down the room, the countess made a despairing gesture to Monsieur de Camps, as if to ask him if that outbreak did not impress him as an alarming symptom. In order to cut short this unpleasant disagreement, of which he was the involuntary cause, he said to Monsieur de l'Estorade:

"Shall we go?"

"Come," was the reply; and the count left the room first, without bidding his wife adieu.

"By the way, I had an errand that I am forgetting!" said the iron-master, retracing his steps. "Madame de Camps will call for you about two o'clock, dear madame, to go to *Jean de Paris* to look at materials for spring gowns; she has arranged that we shall all four go to the horticultural exhibition afterward. L'Estorade and I will come back here for you when we leave Rastignac; and we will wait for you if you have not returned."

Madame de l'Estorade paid little heed to this extended programme; a sudden light had shone in upon her mind. As soon as she was alone, she took Marie-Gaston's letter, and, finding it folded in the original folds, she cried:

"There is no doubt about it! I put it back in the envelope folded so that the writing was on the outside; the poor man must have read it!"

A few hours later Madame de l'Estorade and Madame de Camps were sitting together in the same salon where Sallenauve's cause had been so eloquently pleaded two or three days before.

"Why, what is the matter with you, in Heaven's name?" said Madame de Camps, as she found her friend weeping over a letter she was writing.

Madame de l'Estorade told her all that had taken place, and read Marie-Gaston's letter to her. At another moment the disaster foreshadowed by that letter would have made a deep impression upon Madame de Camps's mind; but the other disaster, of which possibly she was the cause, engrossed all her attention.

"Are you very sure," she asked, "that your husband read that unlucky letter?"

"How can I doubt it?" replied Madame de l'Estorade; "the paper cannot have turned of its own motion in the envelope; moreover, upon thinking it all over, I have an idea that I felt something fall as I was running to René; fate decreed that I should not stop."

"Very often, by tormenting one's memory, one succeeds in obtaining misleading indications from it."

"But, my dear madame, Monsieur de l'Estorade's sudden and marked change of countenance can be nothing less than the result of sudden emotion; you would have thought that he had been struck by lightning."

"Why, then, do you pretend to discover symptoms of inflammation of the liver in a condition of things that is so readily accounted for by a disagreeable surprise?"

"Oh! to-day isn't the first time that I have thought that he had some such trouble. But, when sick people do not complain, you forget that they are sick. See, my dear," she added, pointing to a volume that lay open beside her, "just before you came I read in this medical dictionary that in the case of those whose livers are affected the disposition becomes morose, restless, irritable. Well, I have noticed just that change of disposition in my husband for some time past; you yourself called my attention to it the other day; and that scene of this morning, of which Monsieur de Camps was an eye-witness, and which was unprecedented in our family, seems to me the most alarming of symptoms."

"My dear girl, you act like a person who has determined to torment herself. In the first place, you read medical books, which is the height of imprudence. I defy you to read the description of a disease without believing that you can detect its symptoms in yourself or in those who are dear to you; in the second place, you jumble everything together, the effects of fright and the effects of a chronic disease, which are as different as possible."

"No, no, I do nothing of the sort, and I know perfectly well what I am saying. Have you still to learn that, in our poor human mechanism, if there is any organ that has been affected before, all the powerful emotions by which we may be assailed will concentrate their attacks upon that point?"

"Very well," said Madame de Camps, "let us drop the medical discussion for a moment; if this wretched madman's letter threatens to have any effect upon your husband's health, it threatens the peace of your household much more nearly, and that is what we must consider."

"There is only one course to pursue," said Madame de l'Estorade; "Monsieur de Sallenauve must never set foot in this house again."

"On that subject there is much to be said, and I should be glad to discuss it with you. Do you know that in your conduct yesterday I missed the moderation which has always been one of the most prominent traits of your character—"

"When was that, pray?" demanded Madame de l'Estorade.

"Why, when you exhibited that outburst of gratitude to Monsieur de Sallenauve. When I advised you not to run away from him, lest you should inspire in him a longing to run after you, I did not advise you to throw your kindly feeling at his head in such a way as to give him the vertigo; as the wife of so zealous an upholder of the dynasty as Monsieur de l'Estorade, you ought to have a better idea of the *happy medium*."

"Ah! my dear, no witticisms on my poor husband, I implore you."

"It's not a question of your husband, but of you, dear love. Yesterday you amazed me to such a point, that I came to-day fully resolved to apologize for my first inspiration. I like to have my advice followed, but I do not like to have it followed too closely."

At any other time I would ask you to explain your meaning with reference to my having perverted your advice so shamefully; but at a time when fatality has arranged everything, when it is absolutely necessary that Monsieur de Sallenauve should disappear from our path, what is the use of discussing the degree of kindness to which one ought to go with him?"

"If I must tell you all that is on my mind," rejoined Madame de Camps, "it seems to me that that man is a dangerous acquaintance for you in another direction."

"What do you mean?"

"I refer to Naïs. That child, with her passion for her rescuer, is beginning to cause me a great deal of anxiety."

"Oh!" said the countess, with a melancholy smile, "isn't that attaching a great deal of importance to childish whims?"

"Naïs is a child, of course, but a child who will very soon be a woman. Did not you yourself write me that you were dismayed by the intuition that she seemed to have in some matters far beyond her years?"

"That is true. But, in what you call her passion for Monsieur de Sallenauve, to say nothing of the fact that it is no more than natural, the child exhibits an ingenuousness and a freedom from concealment that preserve the utterly childish character of the sentiment."

"Nevertheless, take my advice, and do not trust her, even after you have turned your vexatious friend away! Just imagine that, when the time for marrying your daughter arrives, this inclination of hers has developed; a pretty kettle of fish that will be!"

"Oh! between now and then, great Heaven!—" exclaimed Madame de l'Estorade, incredulously.

"Between now and then," rejoined Madame de Camps, "Monsieur de Sallenauve may have achieved triumphs which will cause his name to be in everybody's mouth; and with her vivid imagination Naïs is more susceptible than most to the attractions of such splendor."

"But, my dear love, the mere difference in age—"

"Monsieur de Sallenauve is thirty, Naïs will soon be thirteen: that is just the difference that there was between your age and Monsieur de l'Estorade's, when you married him."

"Well, you may be right," said the countess, "and what I have done by design Naïs might do foolishly; but never fear, I will ruin this idol of hers in her mind."

"That again, like the comedy of hatred you propose to play for Monsieur de l'Estorade's benefit, requires to be handled carefully; you might fail of your purpose for lack of a certain natural transition. You must not give him any ground to suspect the inspiration of circumstance, where he should see simply a spontaneous impulse."

"But," said Madame de l'Estorade, excitedly, "do you think that there is likely to be much simulated aversion in my conduct? Why, I hate the man, for he is our evil genius!"

"Come, come, my dear love, be more calm! I should not know you, you who were always the personification of cold common-sense!"

At that moment Lucas entered, to ask his mistress if she would receive *one* Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau. Madame de l'Estorade looked at her friend as if to consult her, saying:

"It is that organist who did Monsieur de Sallenauve such good service in his election; I don't know what he can want of me."

"No matter," said Madame de Camps, "receive him. Before beginning hostilities, it is well to find out what is going on in the enemy's camp."

"Show him in," said the countess.

Jacques Bricheteau was introduced.

He had reckoned so surely upon finding himself on friendly territory, that he had not thought it necessary to pay any special attention to his toilet. A full-skirted, chestnut-colored frock-coat, which one would have tried in vain to identify with the style in vogue at any epoch; a waistcoat of green and gray plaid, buttoned to the neck and surmounted by a black cravat, twisted into a rope, which afforded a glimpse of a shirt of very questionable cleanliness; no collar; yellowish trowsers, gray stockings and laced shoes:—such was the more than négligé costume in which the organist saluted the elegant countess.

"Madame," he said, when he had received an ungracious invitation to be seated, "I presume too far, perhaps, in calling upon you when I have not the honor of your acquaintance; but Monsieur Marie-Gaston told me of the desire you once expressed that I should give lessons to mademoiselle your daughter. My reply was that it would be a difficult matter to arrange, as all my hours were occupied; but monsieur le préfet de police has provided me with some leisure time by dismissing me from a position that I held in his department, so that I am fortunate enough to be able to place myself altogether at your disposal."

"Was the cause of your dismissal, monsieur," inquired Madame de Camps, "the part that you took in Monsieur de Sallenauve's election?"

"As no reason was given me, that seems very probable, especially as I have never before had any sort of trouble with my superiors in twenty years."

"It is impossible to close our eyes to the fact that you seriously interfered with the plans of the government on that occasion," said Madame de l'Estorade, sharply.

"For that reason, madame, I accepted my discharge as a catastrophe I had foreseen; indeed, why should I have cared to retain my paltry place, at the price of Monsieur de Sallenauve's defeat?"

"I am truly grieved," said Madame de l'Estorade, "that I cannot better requite the desire to serve me which you are kind enough to manifest; but I must tell you frankly that I have not as yet come to any decision on the subject of a teacher for my daughter, and I am a little afraid, notwithstanding the very great talent with which you are universally accredited, of the seriousness of your instruction for a girl of thirteen."

"On the contrary, madame," rejoined Jacques Bricheteau, "no one accredits me with any talent at all; Monsieur de Sallenauve and Monsieur Marie-Gaston have heard me once or twice; but, aside from that, I am the most obscure and, perhaps you are right, the most tiresome professor that can be imagined; so let us lay aside the question of lessons to be given mademoiselle your daughter, and let us come to the subject of more vital interest that brings me here; I refer to Monsieur de Sallenauve."

"Has Monsieur de Sallenauve entrusted you with any message for my husband?" demanded Madame de l'Estorade, with marked coolness.

"No, madame," replied Jacques Bricheteau; "unfortunately, he has entrusted me with nothing. I went to his house this morning, but did not find him. On my arrival at Ville-d'Avray, where I was told that I should find him, I learned that he had gone on a journey with Monsieur Marie-Gaston. Thinking, then, that the object and probable duration of that journey might be known to you—"

"Not at all," Madame de l'Estorade interrupted him, curtly.

Even then failing to understand that the step he had taken was ill-advised, and that no explanation was necessary, he continued:

"I received a letter this morning from Arcis-sur-Aube. My aunt, Mother Marie des Anges, sends word to me, by Monsieur de Sallenauve's notary, of a vile plot that is being hatched there, and that may be seriously complicated by our friend's absence. I cannot understand his idea in disappearing without a word to those who may take some interest in him!—"

"That he did not notify you," rejoined Madame de l'Estorade, in the same tone, "may perhaps surprise you; but, as to my husband and myself, there is no occasion for very much surprise."

The significance of that unkind distinction was too clear for Jacques Bricheteau not to be struck by it. He looked at the countess, who lowered her eyes, but the whole expression of her face, which was as cold as the north wind, confirmed the meaning which it was hardly possible to avoid giving to her words.

"I beg your pardon, madame," he said, rising, "I did not know, I could not suspect that Monsieur de Sallenauve's future and his standing in the world were of so little consequence to you. Only a moment ago, in the reception-room, as your servant was hesitating as to whether he should announce me, mademoiselle your daughter, hearing me say that I was Monsieur de Sallenauve's friend, took my part most warmly; I was foolish enough to believe that that kindly feeling reflected the general sentiment of the family."

After drawing this distinction, which was quite as effective as Madame de l'Estorade's, and which paid her back in her own coin, Jacques Bricheteau bowed ceremoniously and prepared to take his leave. Madame de Camps and her friend exchanged a glance, as if to ask each other whether they ought to let this man depart in such humor, after discharging such a cruel shaft. But the comedy of indifference played by Madame de l'Estorade was soon to be unmasked in terrible fashion. At that moment Naïs came running into the room.

"Mamma," she cried, triumphantly, "a letter from Monsieur de Sallenauve!"

The countess's face turned a reddish-purple.

"What way is this to come into the room, like a wild girl?" she said, sternly, to her daughter; "and how do you know that the letter is from the person you have named?"

"Oh!" replied Naïs, turning the knife in the wound, "when he wrote to you from Arcis-sur-Aube, I noticed the handwriting."

"You are a silly, inquisitive child," said the mother, driven out of her usual indulgence by such a series of mischances; "go to your nurse!—With your permission," she added, turning to Bricheteau, to keep herself in countenance, and she began at once to read the letter that had arrived so inopportunely.

"It is for me to crave your permission, madame," the organist replied, "to wait until you have read the letter. *If, by any chance,* Monsieur de Sallenauve gives you any information concerning his journey, you will perhaps be kind enough to allow me to profit by it."

"Monsieur de Sallenauve," said the countess, when she had read the letter, "desires me to say to my husband that he has gone to England, to Hanwell, County of Middlesex. You can write to him, monsieur, to the care of Doctor Ellis."

Jacques Bricheteau made a second ceremonious bow and withdrew.

"Naïs," said Madame de Camps to her friend as soon as they were alone, "has played you a trick of her trade as a lover; but you have well merited it; you treated that poor man with a harshness that deserved something more cutting than the retort with which he ended. He seems like a man of wit, and his '*If, by any chance,* Monsieur de Sallenauve gives you any information,' was very neat, under the circumstances."

"What do you expect?" said Madame de l'Estorade, "the day began badly, all the rest follows as a matter of course."

"Well, and the letter?"

"It is heart-rending; read it yourself."

"Madame," Sallenauve wrote, "I succeeded in overtaking, a few leagues from Paris, Lord Lewin, the stranger I mentioned to you, whom Providence sent to avert a frightful disaster. Possessed of an immense fortune, like many of his compatriots he has had frequent attacks of the spleen, and owes his escape from the terrible consequences of that disease to his strength of character alone. His apparent lack of interest in life and the perfect stoicism with which he speaks of self-inflicted death won for him the confidence of our unhappy friend Marie-Gaston, at Florence, where they met. Being deeply interested in all powerful emotions, Lord Lewin had become very intimate with Doctor Ellis, a physician who has a great reputation for the cure of mental diseases; His Lordship has frequently passed several weeks at the asylum at Hanwell, Middlesex; it is one of the best-managed insane asylums in England, and Doctor Ellis is the superintendent.

"When he arrived at Ville-d'Avray, Lord Lewin had no difficulty in recognizing in Marie-Gaston all the symptoms of incipient melancholia; still invisible to less experienced eyes, it was perfectly apparent to Lord Lewin. *He made a rag-picker of himself*, he said to me, speaking of our poor friend, meaning that, as he and his guest walked in the park, he stopped to pick up worthless objects, wisps of straw, old pieces of paper, and even rusty nails, which he carefully placed in his pocket; that, apparently, is a very familiar symptom to those who have had occasion to observe the premonitory phenomena of insanity. Upon leading the conversation back to their former talks at Florence, Lord Lewin had no difficulty in eliciting from the patient the secret of his contemplated suicide. Believing that he saw his wife every night, the poor fellow had decided to go and join his beloved Louise on the evening of your little ball; so you see that my fears were not at all exaggerated, and that they were rather the result of instinct. Instead of interfering with his plan, Lord Lewin pretended to enter into it.

"'But such men as we are,' he said, 'should not die like bourgeois; there is a way of putting an end to one's life which I had thought of adopting in my own case, and which I suggest that we adopt together. In South America, not far from Patagonia, there is one of the most tremendous waterfalls in the world, called the *Saut de Gayra*. The vapors that rise from it can be seen several leagues away and form seven rainbows above it. An immense volume of water, spreading over a surface more than twelve thousand feet wide, is suddenly confined between the banks of a narrow canal and plunges into the abyss with a more deafening roar than that of a hundred peals of thunder combined. I have always intended to go there to die.'

"'Let us go!' said Marie-Gaston, eagerly.

"'Instantly,' replied Lord Lewin; 'make your preparations: we will go to England and take passage from there, and in a few weeks we shall have reached our destination.'

"In this way, madame, the ingenious Englishman succeeded in postponing the execution of our friend's sinister purpose, and you will understand that he is taking him to England to put him in the hands of Doctor Ellis, who, in his view, has not his equal in Europe in the treatment of the painful malady which is to be entrusted to his care. Had I been present, I should have acceded to this arrangement, which has this advantage, that our friend's illness will never be known here if he should be cured. Being advised by a letter that Lord Lewin left for me at Ville-d'Avray, I at once started in pursuit of the travellers, and I overtook them at Beauvais, where I am now writing to you at a hotel at which Lord Lewin had stopped in order to obtain the full benefit of a fit of drowsiness which finally overcame Marie-Gaston in the carriage, after several weeks of almost unbroken insomnia. Lord Lewin regards this as a most encouraging symptom, and he says, too, that, being taken in hand, as it is to be, at the outset, the unfortunate boy's mental trouble has a most excellent chance of being cured.

"I shall accompany them to Hanwell, taking care not to show myself to Marie-Gaston, as Lord Lewin thinks that my presence might disturb the comparative peace of mind which he owes to the thought of the grandiose death that he is supposed to have started in search of. When we reach the asylum, I shall wait to learn Doctor Ellis's opinion. As the session is to open very soon, I fear that I may not return in time for the first sittings; but I propose to write to the president of the Chamber, and, in case there should be any difficulty about the leave of absence for which I shall ask him, I venture to rely upon Monsieur de l'Estorade's kindness to testify to the fact that my absence is absolutely necessary. I beg him to remember, however, that I cannot, under any consideration, authorize him to explain the nature of the *business* which has called me out of the country for the moment. The assurance of a man like Monsieur de l'Estorade should be sufficient to establish the truth of a fact without other explanation.

"Deign to accept, madame, etc."

As Madame de Camps finished reading the letter, the wheels of a carriage were heard in the courtyard.

"There come our husbands," said the countess; "shall I show this letter to Monsieur de l'Estorade?"

"You cannot do otherwise," replied Madame de Camps. "There would be too much reason to fear indiscretion on Naïs's part. Besides, Monsieur de Sallenauve addresses you in the most respectful way, and there is nothing in the letter to give your husband's suspicions anything to feed upon."

When the peer of France entered the room, Madame de l'Estorade noticed that his face had recovered its usual aspect, and she was preparing to congratulate him upon it, when he spoke first.

"Who is that ill-looking man," he demanded, "whom I found just now talking with Naïs on the stairs?"

As Madame de l'Estorade did not seem to know what he was talking about, he added:

"A man very much marked with the small-pox, with a shabby hat and a chestnut-colored frock-coat."

"Oh! it must have been our late visitor," said Madame de Camps to her friend. "Naïs could not miss the opportunity to have a little talk about her idol."

"But who is the man?"

"His name is Jacques Bricheteau, is it not?" said

Madame de Camps; " he's a friend of Monsieur de Sallenauve."

Seeing that a cloud passed at once over her husband's features, Madame de l'Estorade made haste to explain the twofold object of the organist's visit, and she handed Monsieur de l'Estorade the deputy's letter.

"You think him better, do you not?" she asked Monsieur de Camps, while the count was reading the letter.

" Oh! there's not a trace of what we noticed this morning," the iron-master replied. " He had devoted himself too closely to his work; the exercise did him good; and yet he had a very unpleasant surprise just now at the minister's."

"Why, what happened?" inquired Madame de l'Estorade.

" It seems that your friend Monsieur de Sallenauve's affairs are in rather a bad way."

"I am much obliged for the commission," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, returning the letter to his wife; " I shall certainly do nothing of what he asks me to do."

" Why, have you learned anything unpleasant about him?" said Madame de l'Estorade, trying to ask her questions in a most indifferent tone.

"Yes, Rastignac told me of letters from Arcis, where some very compromising discoveries have been made."

"Well, what did I tell you?" cried Madame de l'Estorade.

"What did you tell me?"

"To be sure, didn't I suggest to you some time ago that Monsieur de Sallenauve was an acquaintance to be dropped? That is the very expression I remember using."

"Do you mean to say that it was I who attracted him?"

"You certainly don't claim that it was I; for, only a moment ago, even before I knew of the deplorable complication you mention, I spoke to Madame de Camps of another reason why we should desire a speedy termination of this acquaintance."

"That is true," said Madame de Camps, "your wife was expressing some anxiety just now concerning Naïs's frantic adoration of her rescuer, and she foresaw very great possible annoyance from it in the future."

"From every point of view," rejoined Monsieur de l'Estorade, "it is an undesirable connection."

"It seems to me," said Monsieur de Camps, who alone was not in the secret, "that you are going a little fast. Some compromising discoveries have been made concerning Monsieur de Sallenauve, you say, but what do they amount to? Wait at least until sentence is pronounced, before you hang him."

"My husband may do what he pleases," said Madame de l'Estorade, "but, for my own part, I should not hesitate to break with him from this moment; I want my friends to be, like Cæsar's wife, absolutely above suspicion."

"The unfortunate part of it is this wretched burden of obligation to him," said Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"Why, monsieur," cried the countess, "if a galley-slave should save my life, must I have him in my salon?"

"Oh! my dear," said Madame de Camps, "you go very far—"

"At all events," said the peer of France, "there's no need of making a scandal; we must let the acquaintance die out quietly; the dear fellow's out of the country now; who can say that he will ever return?"

"Do you mean to say that he went away because of mere rumors?" asked Monsieur de Camps.

"Not precisely that; he invented a pretext," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "but once out of France—"

"As for any such ending as that," said Madame de l'Estorade, "I do not place the least confidence in it; his pretext may well be considered a very good reason for his absence, and I believe that, as soon as he is notified by his friend the organist, he will hasten to return; so, my dear, you must take your courage in both hands and cut short this friendship, if you do not propose that it shall continue."

"So that is really your opinion, is it?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, looking closely at his wife.

"I would stand on no ceremony, but would write him that he would oblige us very much by not coming here again; however, as it would be rather a difficult letter to compose, we might write it together, if you please."

"We will see," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, whose good humor this proposition had entirely restored: "there's no objection to a delay. The most important thing at present is this exhibition of the horticultural society, which we have arranged to attend; it closes at four o'clock, I believe, so that we have just an hour."

Madame de l'Estorade, who had dressed before Madame de Camps's arrival, rang for her maid to bring her hat and shawl.

"You do love me, Renée, don't you?" said her husband, in a low voice, as she stood in front of the mirror.

"How foolish you are to ask me such a question!" she replied, looking up at him with her most affectionate expression.

"Then I must make a confession: I read the letter that Philippe brought."

"I am no longer astonished at the change I noticed in you; but I also have a confession to make to you. This letter of dismissal to Monsieur de Sallenauve, which I proposed that we should write together, I wrote myself just after you went out; you will find it in my blotting-case, and, if you are satisfied with it, send it."

Beside himself with delight at this swift sacrifice of his alleged successor, Monsieur de l'Estorade was unable to restrain his joy; he took his wife in his arms and kissed her effusively.

"Well, well!' cried Monsieur de Camps, "matters seem to be going rather better than this morning."

"This morning I was a fool," replied the peer of France, rummaging his wife's blotter for the draft of the letter, as to which he might well have taken her word.

"Hush!" whispered Madame de Camps to her husband, preventing him from replying, "I will explain all this to you later."

The peer of France, younger by ten years, offered Madame de Camps his arm, while the iron-master offered his to the countess.

"How about Naïs?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, as he noticed his daughter gazing mournfully at the little procession, "aren't we going to take her?"

"No," said the countess; "I am not pleased with her."

"Nonsense!" said the father, "I grant an amnesty. Go and put on your hat," he added, addressing his daughter.

Naïs looked at her mother to obtain a ratification of the permission, which her previous knowledge of the established division of authority in the house led her to consider necessary.

"Go," said the countess, "as it is your father's wish."

While they were awaiting the child's return, the count said to his old servant, who was standing beside a table on which lay an unfinished letter:

"Whom are you writing to, Lucas?"

"To my son, who is very impatient to obtain his sergeant's chevrons. I am telling him that monsieur le comte has promised me a line for his colonel."

"Faith, so I have," said the count; "it had entirely slipped my memory. Remind me of it to-morrow morning; it is the first thing I will do when I rise."

"Monsieur le comte is very kind."

"Here," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, feeling in his waistcoat pocket and taking out three gold pieces; "send these to the corporal from me and tell him they are to christen his chevrons."

Lucas was stupefied; he had never seen his master so affable and so generous.

When Naïs returned, Madame de l'Estorade, marvelling at herself for the courage she had shown in being stern to her for half an hour, embraced her as if she had not seen her for two years; thereupon they started for the Luxembourg, where the horticultural society exhibited its products in those days.

Toward the close of the audience which Monsieur Octave de Camps, escorted by Monsieur de l'Estorade, had at last succeeded in obtaining from Rastignac, that functionary's usher entered and handed him the cards of Monsieur le Procureur-Général Vinet and Monsieur Maxime de Trailles.

"Very well," the minister replied, "say to these gentlemen that I shall be at their service in a moment."

In a very few moments the iron-master and Monsieur de l'Estorade rose, and it was at that time that Rastignac gave the peer of France to understand very distinctly what the danger was that was rising above the parliamentary horizon of his friend

Sallenauve. At the word *friend,* Monsieur de l'Estorade cried out:

"I do not know, my dear minister," he said, "why you persist in giving that title to a man who is merely an acquaintance of ours, and, I may add, a very transient acquaintance, if the reports of which you have just told me prove to be well-founded."

"I am delighted to hear you speak so," the minister replied; "for I confess that, in reflecting upon the hostilities which seem probable between that gentleman and ourselves, I have been considerably embarrassed by the great regard which I supposed that you entertained for him."

"I am very grateful for the feeling," the peer of France replied, "but please remember that I give you *carte blanche.* You are at liberty to treat Monsieur de Sallenauve as a political foe, without the slightest apprehension that the blows you may deal him will react on me."

Thereupon they parted, and Messieurs Vinet and Maxime de Trailles were introduced.

*

Procureur-Général Vinet, father of the Olivier Vinet whom we already know, was one of the warmest and most frequently consulted of all the champions of personal government. In every ministerial scheme that was looked upon as possible, he was assigned to the portfolio of the department of justice, and was therefore thoroughly acquainted with all the intricacies of the situation, and nothing was *cooked up* in the way of secret intrigues that he was not concerned in it as an adviser, even if he had no active share in carrying it out. The electoral affairs of Arcis-sur-Aube were within his cognizance for a twofold reason: in the first place, his son was employed in the prosecuting attorney's office in that town; and secondly, being connected through his wife with the Chargebœufs of Brie, of which family the Cinq-Cygnes of Champagne are a younger branch, he considered himself in honor bound by that exalted connection to display his importance in both provinces by never losing an opportunity to meddle in their affairs. And so, when, during the morning, Monsieur de Trailles called upon the minister and told him of a letter from Madame Beauvisage, full of matters tending to compromise the reputation of the new deputy from Arcis, the minister replied, without listening to anything in the way of comment:

"See Vinet for me and try to bring him here at once."

When notified by Maxime de Trailles, who had offered to call for him with his carriage, Vinet had willingly complied with Rastignac's wish; and now that we have him in the minister's cabinet, we shall soon know a little more concerning the danger hanging over Sallenauve's head, of which Jacques Bricheteau and Monsieur de l'Estorade have given us a very insufficient hint.

"So you say, my good friends," said the minister, as soon as the conference was opened, "that we may have a hold upon this puritan, whom I met last night at Madame de l'Estorade's, and who seemed to me to be uncompromisingly hostile to us?"

As he was present in no official capacity, Maxime knew his place too well to undertake to answer that question. Vinet, on the other hand, having an overweening idea of his political importance since he had become procureur-général, still had too much of the lawyer in him to miss an opportunity of taking the floor.

"When monsieur did me the honor to show me a letter from Madame Beauvisage this morning," he hastened to reply, indicating Maxime, "I had just received one from my son, in which he gave me almost precisely the same information. I agree with monsieur that it may prove to be a serious matter for our adversary, but only on condition that it is carefully handled."

"As yet I have only a very imperfect idea of the matter," observed the minister; "as I was very desirous to have your opinion, my dear Vinet, in order to avoid doing the thing twice over, I requested Monsieur de Trailles to postpone the details until we should all be together."

This was a direct authorization to Maxime to take it upon himself to tell the story, but Vinet purloined this second opportunity to speak.

"This," said he, "is what my son Olivier writes me, and it is confirmed by the letter of madame la mairesse, in whom, by the way, you would have had an excellent deputy, my dear minister. It seems that, on a recent market-day, Pigoult, the notary, who still has charge of all monsieur le député's business, having powerfully assisted in his election, received a visit from a peasant-woman of Romilly, a large village in the immediate neighborhood of Arcis. According to the claim of the Marquis de Sallenauve, who reappeared in the province very recently, he is the only descendant to-day in existence of the Sallenauve family, whereas this woman exhibits documents in perfectly proper form, which go to prove that she also is a living Sallenauve, in the direct line, and a kinswoman in an inheritable degree of everyone who bears that name."

"But was she as ignorant of the marquis's existence as he was of hers?" queried Rastignac.

"That point is not made clear by her statements," the procureur-général replied; "but that very confusion pleases me more than anything, for you understand that great difficulties may readily arise between relatives thus situated."

"Be kind enough to go on," said the minister. "Before drawing conclusions, we must know the facts; a course that is not always pursued in the Chamber of Deputies, by the way, as you are in a position to know."

"And that is not always disagreeable for ministers," laughed Maxime.

"Monsieur is right," said Vinet; "hail to the sower of discord! But, to return to our peasant-woman, who has fallen into poverty and a condition very much below her birth as a result of the degeneration of the Sallenauves: she appeared *in formâ pauperis*, and we may well believe that a little well-timed generosity would have silenced her at once. But we may believe also that she was not extremely pleased with the manner in which her petition was received by Maître Achille Pigoult; for, upon leaving his office, she went at once to the market-place, and with the support of a village attorney, who had come to town with her, she indulged in some very uncomplimentary allusions to my beloved colleague in the Chamber: saying, at one time, that it was not true that the Marquis de Sallenauve was his father, and again, that it was not even true that there is a Marquis de Sallenauve now living. Her conclusion was always the same, that this Sallenauve of recent date is a heartless wretch, who did not know his own flesh and blood; but she added that she knew a way to make him disgorge, and that, with the assistance of the able man who had come with her to give her the benefit of his advice, *she would make monsieur le député dance*, he might rest assured of that."

"I have no objection," Rastignac replied; "but I suppose, of course, that this woman is supplied with proofs in support of her assertions?"

"That is the weak part of the affair," Vinet replied; "but let me go on. The government has in the commissioner of police at Arcis an official as devoted as he is intelligent. As he walked around among the different groups, as his custom is on market days, he overheard some of the peasant-woman's unkind remarks, and went at once to the mayor's door, where he asked, not for Monsieur but for Madame Beauvisage, to whom he narrated what had taken place."

"So he's a mere nobody, eh, this candidate whom you represented to us as such a treasure?" said Rastignac to Maxime.

"Just the man you wanted," was the reply, "incapable to the last degree. That is why there is nothing that I would not do to make up for our deplorable defeat."

"Madame Beauvisage," continued Vinet, "at once felt that she must talk with this woman whose tongue is hung so loosely, and, in order to procure an interview with her, it occurred to her—and a very good idea it was—to bid Groslier, the commissioner of police, go to the woman and with a threatening air, as if the authorities disapproved of the rash statement in which she ventured to indulge concerning a member of the national legislature, to order her to appear at once before monsieur le maire."

"Did Madame Beauvisage invent that method of procedure?"

"Yes, she really did," replied Maxime; "she's a very superior woman."

"Being closely pressed by the mayoress, who was careful to fortify herself with her husband's presence before proceeding to the examination, the peasant was far from categorical in her replies: the way in which she had satisfied herself that the deputy could not be the marquis's son, and, on the other hand, her pretended certainty of the non-existence of the marquis himself, were not very triumphantly established; hearsay, vague rumors, conclusions drawn by the village attorney, those were about all that could be drawn from her."

"In that case, what does all this amount to?" queried the minister.

"To absolutely nothing, from the standpoint of the Palais de Justice," replied the procureur-général; "for, even if this woman were prepared to prove that the acknowledgment of Dorlange was a mere whim of the Marquis de Sallenauve, she would have no standing in court to take steps to annul it. By the terms of Article 339 of the Civil Code, a present interest by descent, nothing less, entitles a person to attack the acknowledgment of a natural child; in other words, a person, to be so entitled, must have some claim to the inheritance in the distribution of which the child whose birth is contested would be entitled to share."

"Your balloon inflates well!" said the minister.

"On the other hand," continued Vinet, still pursuing his theme, "if the good woman decides to deny the existence of the Marquis de Sallenauve, in the first place she disinherits herself, for she certainly could make no claim to a share of the fortune of a man who was not her kinsman; and in the second place, it is for the Department of Justice, not for her, to prosecute in the matter of a substitution of persons, which she would be competent, at the utmost, to denounce to the authorities."

"Whence you conclude?" said Rastignac, in the abrupt tone that warns a too prolix speaker to be more concise.

"Whence I conclude that, legally speaking, the Romilly peasant would make a wretched speculation by pursuing either of these claims, for one of the two would certainly be lost by her, and she could gain absolutely nothing by the other, which she cannot even institute; but, politically speaking, the affair takes on an entirely different aspect."

"Let us look at the political side, then," said the minister, "for thus far I can see nothing in it."

"In the first place," continued the procureur-général, "you agree with me, do you not, that there is no objection to bringing a groundless lawsuit?"

"I agree with you perfectly."

"In the second place, I fancy that you will not care particularly if our litigant embarks upon an action to annul the acknowledgment of Dorlange, in which she will get nothing in return for her disbursements?"

"No; I assure you that it is a matter of entire indifference to me."

"In any event, even if you had felt any compunctions on her account, I would still have advised you to let things take their course, as the Beauvisages have undertaken to defray all the expenses, including the costs of the peasant's sojourn in Paris and those of her legal adviser."

"Well," said Rastignac, still urging a conclusion, "suppose the suit begun; what will come of that?"

"What will come of it?' echoed the procureur-général, with increasing animation; "why, whatever you choose to make come of it, if, before the cause is heard, your newspapers intervene with their comments, and your friends with their oral insinuations. What will come of it? Why, the greatest loss of prestige for our adversary, suspected of having bundled himself up in a name that does not belong to him! What will come of it? Why, an opportunity for a crushing interpellation from the tribune."

"Which you will undertake to hurl at him?" queried Rastignac.

"Oh! I don't know about that; I must look into the matter a little and see what turn it is likely to take."

"For the present, then," rejoined the minister, "the whole business comes down to an application of Basile's theory concerning slander,—that it is always well to stir it up because something always sticks."

"Slander! slander!" rejoined the procureur-général; "that's to be seen, and perhaps it would turn out to be nothing more than true evil-speaking. Monsieur de Trailles here knows much better than we how affairs were managed. He will tell you that the disappearance of the father immediately after the consummation of the acknowledgment made a deep impression throughout the province; that everybody had a vague idea of mysterious combinations tending to favor the election of the man of whom we are speaking. You do not know, my dear fellow, all that may be made of a legal discussion scientifically handled; in my long and laborious career as advocate I have seen miracles performed in that direction. But a parliamentary discussion is another affair. There you have no need of proofs, you can kill your man with nothing but probabilities and assertions, supported with a little show of self-assurance."

"But, to resume," interposed Rastignac, like an exact and careful man of business, "let us see how you propose that the affair shall be handled."

"In the first place," Vinet replied, "I would allow the Beauvisages to pay all the travelling and hotel expenses of the peasant and her counsel, as they choose to do it, and all the expenses of the suit, when the time comes."

"Do I object to that?" said the minister; "have I the right or the power to object?"

"The case will be put in the hands of a shrewd and able solicitor, Desroches, for example, whom Monsieur de Trailles employs. He would know how to put a little flesh on a lawsuit whose gauntness you have very justly commented upon."

"I certainly shall not be the man," rejoined the minister, "to say to Monsieur de Trailles: 'I forbid you to advise anybody you please to avail himself of the services of your solicitor!'"

"Then we must have an advocate who can talk with the proper amount of feeling of that holy and sacred thing, the family; who can assume an air of righteous indignation at the thought of the surreptitious manœuvres whereby interlopers may endeavor to make their way by stealth into its sacred circle."

"Desroches will direct you to the man you need, and the government will never prevent an advocate from speaking, and being carried away with indignation."

"But, monsieur le ministre," said Maxime, whom Rastignac's lack of warmth impelled to lay aside his rôle, which had thus far been a passive one, "is non-interference all the assistance we can expect from the government in this matter?"

"You did not anticipate, I imagine, that we would undertake the lawsuit on our own account?"

"No, of course not; but we were justified in assuming that you would show some interest in it."

"But how? in what way?"

"What can I say? As monsieur le procureur-général said a moment ago, by ringing the changes on it in your newspapers, by instructing your friends to hawk it about, by using the great influence that those in authority always possess over the minds of the magistrates."

"Many thanks!" retorted Rastignac. "When you want the government for an accomplice, my dear Maxime, you must bring forward plots a little more deftly woven; from your business-like air this morning I believed that there was something in what you had to tell me, and I disturbed our excellent procureur-général, who knows how highly I esteem his counsel and his knowledge; but really your scheme seems to me so transparent and so loosely knit that one can easily look through it to inevitable defeat. If I were not married and aspired to marry Mademoiselle Beauvisage, I should be more audacious perhaps; it is for you therefore to push the affair as you think best; I do not say that you will not have the good wishes of the government in your career, but it certainly will not descend with you."

"But let us see a moment," said Vinet, forestalling Maxime, who would undoubtedly have made a sharp retort; "suppose we treat it as a criminal matter; suppose the peasant woman, at the instigation of the Beauvisages, denounces the man who appeared before the notary as a fictitious Sallenauve; in that case the deputy is a confederate, and he will have the court of assize to deal with."

"But again, where are your proofs?" said Rastignac; "have you a shadow of proof?"

"Just now you yourself agreed," observed Maxime, "that there is no objection to instituting a groundless suit."

"In the civil courts, yes; but on the criminal side, if you fail, it is a much more serious matter; and you would fail, for you would undertake, without one iota of proof, to attack the genuineness of a document drawn by a public officer. That would be a sweet task! the affair would necessarily be terminated by a nonsuit, even before the public hearing. If we wanted to furnish our adversary with a pedestal like the Column of July, we could go about it in no better way."

"So that you see absolutely nothing to be done?" said Maxime.

"By us, no. As for you, my dear Maxime, who have no official position, and who could, at need, maintain the attack on Monsieur de Sallenauve's character, pistol in hand, there is nothing to prevent you from trying your hand at this prosecution."

"Yes," said Maxime, bitterly, "I am a sort of *condottiere*."

"Not at all; you are a man with an instinctive conviction of the existence of certain facts which it is impossible to prove in a court of law, and you do not fear to submit to the judgment of God."

Monsieur de Trailles rose in a decidedly ill-humor. Vinet also rose, and said, as he offered his hand to Rastignac:

"I cannot deny that your conduct is dictated by great prudence, and I do not say that I would not do the same if I were in your place."

"No hard feeling, Maxime," said the minister to Monsieur de Trailles, who bowed to him with cold dignity.

"Can you understand such prudery?" said Maxime, when the conspirators were alone in the reception-room.

"Perfectly," said Vinet, "and you seem to me to be very easily taken in for a bright man."

"Oh! of course, to make you lose your time and throw away my own for the pleasure of seeing the foundations laid of a prize for virtue!"

"That is not the point; I consider you very innocent to believe seriously in the refusal of assistance that makes you so wrathful."

"What, do you think—?"

"I think that it's a very risky affair; that, if the plot succeeds, the government will gather in all the benefit accruing from it with folded arms; and that, on the other hand, if we fail of success, it will be just as delighted to have no share in the defeat. But I know Rastignac, and you may be sure of this: without seeming to take any interest in what we do, and without compromising himself, he will help us more materially, perhaps, than by declared connivance. Just consider! Did he say a single word as to the morality of the attack? Did he not say again and again: 'I make no objection; I haven't the right to interfere with anything?' And what fault had he to find with the poison of slander? that it is not certain enough of killing its man. The truth is, my dear monsieur, there is hard work to be done, and all

Desroches's cunning will be none too much to give a favorable turn to the affair."

"It is your opinion, then, that I had better see him?"

"What! is it my opinion? Why, instantly, as soon as you leave me."

"Wouldn't it be advisable for him to come and talk the matter over with you?"

"Oh! no, no," replied Vinet. "I may be the man to make the interpellation in the Chamber; Desroches might be seen at my office, and I must not be deprived of my disinterestedness."

Thereupon he bowed to Maxime, and seemed in haste to leave him, on the pretext that he must go to the Chamber to find out what was being said in the *Salle des Conferences*.

"But," said Maxime, running after him, "suppose that I should have occasion to ask your advice?"

"I leave Paris this evening to look over my department before the opening of the session."

"But what about this interpellation that it may fall to you to make?"

"Oh! I or somebody else will make it; I will use all possible diligence; but, you understand, I must see that my shop is in order before leaving it for at least five or six months."

"A pleasant journey to you, Monsieur le Procureur-Général!" said Maxime, ironically, taking leave of him for the last time.

Monsieur de Trailles, when he was alone, had a few moments of discouragement, fancying that he could see that those two political Bertrands intended to make him pull the chestnuts out of the fire. Rastignac's conduct was especially galling to him, when he thought of their first meeting at Madame de Restaud's just twenty years before. He, a man with a fixed position, holding at that moment the sceptre of society, and Rastignac, a poor student, utterly ignorant of social forms, and refused admission to Madame de Restaud's house, immediately after his first call, during which he had succeeded in committing two or three gross improprieties! And now Rastignac was a peer of France and minister, and he, Maxime, become his agent, was obliged to stand, with lowered weapon, and be told that his schemes were too apparent and that he might carry them out alone, if he liked! But this discouragement was only momentary.

"Very good!" he cried, "I will start alone upon this lawsuit, for my instinct tells me that there is something in it. How now! a Dorlange, a nobody, hold in check Comte Maxime de Trailles, and make a stepping-stone of his defeat! There are so many secret passages in that man's life that I cannot fail, sooner or later, to uncover one of them.—To my solicitor," he said to his coachman, opening the carriage door for himself.—"After all," he added, as he sank luxuriously back upon the cushions, "if I cannot succeed in ruining the vile creature's fortune, I will compel him to put some outrageous affront upon me; then I shall have the choice of weapons, I will fire first.—I am a better shot than the Duc de

Rhétoré, my insolent friend, and I will kill you, never fear!"

It is worth while to remark that Monsieur Maxime de Trailles had become very much excited simply at the idea of being taken for a *condottiere*.

Desroches was at home, and Monsieur de Trailles was immediately admitted to his study. Desroches was a solicitor who, like Raphael, had had his ups and downs. In the first place, possessed of the bare title of solicitor, without clients, he had taken any sort of cause, and had been by no means satisfied with his standing before the court. But he was a hard worker, thoroughly at home in all the tricks of pettifoggery, an inquisitive observer and diligent reader of the impulses of the human heart; he had eventually succeeded therefore in *making* a good practice, had married a rich wife, and had seriously abandoned the tortuous path as soon as he had found that he could afford to walk straight. In 1839, Desroches had become an honest and shrewd solicitor; that is to say, he espoused the interests of his clients with warmth and skill, he would never have advised an openly dishonorable act, and still less would he have lent his hand to it. As for the fine flower of scrupulosity which was a noticeable trait in the character of Derville and some other members of his profession, aside from the fact that it is very difficult to stop its evaporation in this world of business of which Monsieur de Talleyrand said: "Business means somebody's else property!" it can never be the second stage of an existence. The loss of that soft down of the mind, like the loss of all forms of virginity, is irreparable; Desroches therefore had never aspired to regain it; he would no longer venture upon anything base or dishonorable; but to the shrewd tricks permitted by the Code of Procedure, the surprises and sharp practice with which one may legally combat an adversary, he did not hesitate to resort. Desroches was an intellectual man; he loved the pleasures of the table, too, and like most persons who are subjected to the brutal domination of imperious toil, he felt the need of powerful distractions, highly seasoned and taken on the wing. Thus, while taking wholesome recreation from professional labors, he had become the favorite solicitor of men of letters, artists, stage-girls, famous lorettes and fashionable Bohemians after the style of Maxime, because he enjoyed living their lives and because all those classes of people were congenial to him, as he was much liked by them. Their witty slang, their somewhat relaxed morals, their slightly *picaresque* adventures, their clever expedients, their courageous and honorable toil, in a word, their splendors and their miseries,—all of these he understood perfectly, and, like an ever-indulgent providence, he lent them aid and counsel whenever he was called upon. But, in order to conceal from his more serious and profitable *clientèle* his somewhat unconventional intimacy with these clients of his heart, inasmuch as he was married and had children, Desroches had his days for being the husband and paterfamilias, notably Sundays. It rarely happened that he did not appear on that day in the Bois de Boulogne, in a modest calèche, accompanied by his wife, in whose ugliness was written the handsome figure of her marriage portion. On the front seat of the carriage was a group of three children who had the misfortune to resemble their mother. This family picture, this advertisement of the habit of keeping the Sabbath-day holy, were so unlike the week-day Desroches, dining at all sorts of restaurants with all the noted high-livers of both sexes, that one of them, Malaga, a circus-rider, famous for her bright and racy remarks, observed that solicitors ought not to be allowed to disguise themselves so, and to deceive the public by taking pasteboard children out to drive.

To this relative probity Monsieur de Trailles had come to seek counsel, which he never failed to do whenever any perplexing question arose in his life. In accordance with his usual excellent custom, Desroches listened without interruption to the long statement of the case submitted to him, including the interview that had just taken place at Rastignac's. As Maxime had no secrets from this confessor, he disclosed his reasons for wishing ill to Sallenauve, and insisted with indubitable good faith that he had usurped the name under which he was to sit in the Chamber. His hatred served him in the stead of convincing evidence of a crime that was at the utmost possible or probable. In reality, Desroches had no desire to undertake a case in which he could not see the slightest chance of success; but his lax probity showed itself in this, that he discussed the matter with his client as if it were an ordinary case, and did not tell him distinctly his opinion concerning this trumped-up lawsuit which was, in reality, a mere intrigue. The amount of verbal connivance in the domain of evil, which does not go so far as actual complicity in action, is truly incalculable. "What difference does it make to me? let them fight! Why should I pose as the cold-blooded knight-errant of virtue?"—that is what men of Desroches's temperament say to one another, and it would be hard to compute the number of such men produced by our advanced civilization.

"In the first place, my friend," said the solicitor, "a civil proceeding is not to be thought of; even if your Romilly peasant had her hands full of proofs, she would be declared incompetent to prosecute her claim, because, so far as at present appears, she has no interest which entitles her to attack the acknowledgment of her opponent."

"Yes, that is what Procureur-Général Vinet said just now."

"As for the criminal prosecution, you can unquestionably start it by complaining to the authorities of the substitution."

"Vinet seemed to favor the criminal prosecution," said Maxime, interrupting him.

"Very good, but there are numerous objections to that method. In the first place, there must be a perceptible amount of proof before the complaint will even be received; in the second place, when the complaint has been received and the Crown Office has decided to prosecute, a much more positive appearance of guilt is necessary to secure a conviction; and then, suppose the crime to be proved against the *soi-disant* Marquis de Sallenauve, how are you to establish the complicity of his *soi-disant* son, who may have been deceived by a schemer?"

"But what interest could a schemer have had in bestowing on this Dorlange all the advantage he has reaped from this acknowledgment in his favor?"

"Oh! my dear monsieur," replied Desroches, "in questions of birth all sorts of curious performances are possible; there is no other class of cases that has furnished so much material for compilers of *causes célèbres* and novelists; but, in addition to that, in the eyes of the law, substitution of persons is not directly a crime."

"How so?" exclaimed Maxime; "that is impossible!"

"Look you, my friend," said Desroches, taking down his Five Codes, "be kind enough to read Article 145 of the Penal Code, the only article which seems to provide for the proceeding you have in mind, and see if the crime we are discussing is provided for there."

Maxime read aloud Article 145, in these words:

"'Every public functionary or officer who, in the performance of his functions, shall have committed a forgery—whether by false signatures—or by alteration of documents, writings, or signatures—*or by substitution of persons*—'"

"There, you see," said Maxime, "'*by substitution of persons!*'"

"Go on to the end," said Desroches.

"'Or by substitution of persons,'" continued Monsieur de Trailles, "'or by writing or intercalations upon records or other public documents, after their completion or deposit in the record-office, *shall be punished by penal servitude for life.*'"

Monsieur de Trailles dwelt fondly on the last words, which seemed to give him a foretaste of the fate in store for Sallenauve.

"My dear count," said Desroches, "you do as all litigants do,—read the law in the sense that favors your claim: but you do not notice that the only persons mentioned in the article we are considering are *public functionaries or officers*, and that there is no provision for the crime of substitution of persons, when committed by others."

Maxime reread the article and convinced himself of the accuracy of Desroches's comment.

"But there must be some such provision somewhere?" he urged.

"Not at all; you may safely trust my knowledge of the Code, and believe that it is entirely mute on that subject."

"In that case, the crime that we propose to denounce has the privilege of impunity?"

"That is to say," replied Desroches, "that its punishment is always problematical. Sometimes the judges supplement the silence of the law by reasoning—"

The solicitor interrupted his sentence to turn over the pages of a law-book.

"And here," he continued, "are two judgments of assize courts, reported in Carnot's *Commentary on the Penal Code:* one of July 7, 1814, and the other of April 24, 1818, both confirmed by the Court of Appeal, by which certain persons who were neither public functionaries nor officers were convicted of the crime of forgery by substitution of persons; but those two judgments, which stand alone, are based upon an article in which the crime they assume to punish is not even mentioned, and the argument by which that distorted application of the law is supported is very labored. You will understand, therefore, that the issue of such a proceeding is always very doubtful, for, in the absence of a positive provision, we can never tell how the magistrates will decide."

"And so your conclusion, like Rastignac's, is that we must send our peasant-woman back to Romilly, and that there is absolutely nothing to be done?"

"There is always something to be done," replied Desroches, "when you know how to go about it. There is one complication that does not seem to have occurred to you or Rastignac or Monsieur Vinet,—that is that an authorization by the Chamber is essential to a criminal prosecution of a member of that body, except in the case of a person taken *in flagrante delicto.*"

"True," said Maxime, "but how can an additional complication relieve us from our embarrassment?"

"You would not be sorry to send your adversary to the galleys, I suppose?" queried the solicitor, with a laugh.

"A knave who will perhaps make me lose the chance of a rich marriage," exclaimed Maxime, with comical earnestness; "who poses as a man of strict virtue, and who resorts to such impudent schemes as this!"

"You must make up your mind, however, to a less brilliant result. To raise a pretty little scandal about your man, to cause him to lose caste entirely, would effect a part of your object, I should say?"

"To be sure; when you can't have pheasants, you eat veal."

"Your aspirations thus reduced, this is what I would advise: Do not instruct your peasant to make a criminal complaint against this gentleman who stands in your way, but let her place in the hands of the President of the Chamber of Deputies a simple request that she be authorized to prosecute. Very probably the authorization will be denied, and the prosecution will not go beyond that stage; but the fact of its being asked will make a sensation in the Chamber, none the less; the newspapers will have the right to take it up, and the ministry will be at liberty, surreptitiously, to cause this vague accusation to be repeated with envenomed exaggeration by its friends."

"*Peste!* my dear fellow," said Maxime, overjoyed to find at last an opening for his instinct of hatred, "you are a great man, greater than all these alleged statesmen; but who will draw up this petition for leave to prosecute?"

"Oh! not I," replied Desroches, who did not choose to involve himself more deeply in the mire; "it isn't a legal document, it's a weapon of war, and I have nothing to do with that game; but there are quantities of briefless lawyers always ready to take a hand in a political shindy; Massol, for instance, will draw it up for you in admirable shape. I shall be obliged to you, by the way, if you will not say that I suggested the idea."

"Not I!" said Maxime, "I'll take the credit of it to myself, and perhaps Rastignac will bite at my scheme in this shape."

"Very good, but take care not to make an enemy of Vinet, who will consider it very impertinent of you to have had an idea which ought naturally to have occurred to the mind of such a great parliamentary tactician as he is."

"Oh! before long," said Maxime, rising, "I hope that the Vinets, the Rastignacs, and others will find that they cannot reckon without me. Where do you dine to-night?" he added.

That is a question that *viveurs* freely ask one another.

"In a cavern," replied Desroches, "with a band."

"Where might that be?"

"You must at some time or other, in the course of your erotic existence, have had recourse to the kind offices of a dealer in toilet articles named Madame de Saint-Estève?"

"No," said Maxime, "I have always looked after my own business."

"True, I didn't think of that," said the solicitor; "you are a conquering hero of the best society, where, as a general rule, they have no use for go-betweens of that sort. But the name of Madame de Saint-Estève is not unknown to you?"

"Certainly not; her place is on Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc; it was she who, a long while ago, put Nucingen in communication with little Esther, who cost him something like five hundred thousand francs. She seems to be connected in some way with a villain of her own sort, who has the same name, and who is now at the head of the secret police."

"That is something I know nothing about," replied Desroches; "but what I can say is that the excellent woman made a fortune in her trade of *procuress*, as they used to say in the days when, under a less high-necked moral code than ours, that industry had a name; and to-day, without modifying her former occupation to any great extent, she lives in magnificent style on Rue de Provence, where she is at the head of a matrimonial agency."

"And that is where you are to dine?" asked Maxime.

"Yes, my dear monsieur, with the manager of the Italian theatre in London, Emile Blondet, Andoche Finot, Lousteau, Félicien Vernou, Théodore Gaillard, Hector Merlin, and Bixiou, who was told to invite me because they would need the aid of my *experience and my very great business ability*."

"Aha! so there's some financial business under this dinner?"

"There is, my dear monsieur, a matter of a silent partnership, also a theatrical engagement, and it is proposed to entrust to me the preparation of the necessary documents; you understand that the honorable guests who are invited with me will undertake to act as trumpeters of the second of these two matters, as soon as it is signed."

"What is this engagement that is to be made with so much display?"

"Oh! of a *star* destined, it seems, to make a European success; an Italian girl whom a great Swedish nobleman, Count Halphertius, discovered through the ministrations of Madame de Saint-Estève. The illustrious foreigner furnishes the *impresario* three hundred thousand francs to enable her to make her début in London at the Opera."

"Does this great nobleman propose to marry her?"

"Hum!" said Desroches. "Thus far nothing has been said to me about drawing the marriage contract. You see Madame de Saint-Estève is likely to have kept a little of the thirteenth arrondissement in the management of her agency."

"Well, my dear fellow, I wish you much pleasure," said Maxime, taking his leave at last. "If your star makes a success in London, we shall probably see her in Paris next winter; for my own part, I propose to go and do my best to block the rising of the sun of Arcis. By the way, where does Massol live?"

"Faith, I can't tell you; I never gave him any briefs, for I never employ advocates who meddle with politics; but you can send for his address to the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, of which he is one of the editors."

Maxime went himself to the office of the newspaper to procure Massol's address; but, probably because of creditors, the office-boy had express orders to leave all inquirers in ignorance of the advocate's place of abode, and Monsieur de Trailles, despite his imperious and haughty airs, had his trouble for his pains and was unable to obtain the information he sought. Luckily he remembered that Massol rarely missed a performance at the Opera, and he was almost certain of meeting him in the lobby that evening. Before he dined, he went to a small furnished lodging-house on Rue Montmartre, where he had installed the peasant and her legal adviser, who had already arrived in Paris. He found them at table, feasting bountifully at the expense of the Beauvisages. He ordered them to be at his rooms between eleven and twelve the next forenoon, and not to breakfast first.

He found Massol at the Opera that evening, as he had expected. Accosting him with the courtesy tinctured with impertinence which was characteristic of him, he said:

"Monsieur, I should be glad to talk with you about a matter of business, partly legal, partly political. Were it not that it requires to be discussed with absolute secrecy, I should have had the honor of calling at your office, but I thought that we could talk in more security at my rooms, where I desire, by the way, to put you in communication with two other persons. May I hope, therefore, that you will do me the honor to come and take a cup of tea with me to-morrow morning, about eleven?"

If Massol had had an office, it may be that, for the sake of the dignity of his cloth, he would not have consented thus to overturn the usual order of things by calling upon his client instead of compelling his client to call upon him. But, as he lived on a perch rather than in lodgings, he was delighted with an arrangement which left the secret of his domicile unimpaired.

"I shall have the honor, monsieur," he hastened to reply, "to call upon you to-morrow at the hour you name."

"You know, Rue Pigalle?" said Maxime, as he left him.

"Perfectly well," replied Massol, "two steps from Rue de la Rochefoucauld."

*

On the evening that Sallenauve, Marie-Gaston, and Jacques Bricheteau went to Saint-Sulpice to hear Signora Luigia, that church was the scene of an incident which passed almost unnoticed. Through the seldom-used door that opens on Rue Palatine, opposite Rue Servandoni, a fair-haired young man suddenly entered the building. He was so excited and in such haste that he did not think even to remove a glazed leather cap of the shape of those worn by the students in German universities. As he hurried toward a spot where the crowd was most dense, he felt a grasp upon his arm, and instantly his face, which was flushed and eager, changed to a livid pallor; but, when he turned, he saw that he had taken fright at nothing. He found himself confronted by the verger, who said, in an imposing tone:

"Is your cap nailed to your head, young man?"

"I beg your pardon, monsieur," replied the person thus apostrophized, "I was thinking of something else."

Having profited by the lesson in divine and human courtesy that he had received, he plunged into the densest part of the throng, which he forced his way through with an air of authority, breaking out a path with his elbows, not without receiving some rebuffs to which he paid no heed. Having by this means reached an empty space, he turned and cast a rapid, anxious glance on all sides; then, hastening to the door opening on Rue Garancière, almost directly opposite that by which he had entered, he walked swiftly away and soon disappeared in one of the unfrequented streets in the neighborhood of the Saint-Germain market. A few seconds after the irruption of this strange worshipper, the same door gave access to a man with a terribly scarred face surrounded by a broad fringe of white whiskers; thick hair of the same color, but with a somewhat rusty look, fell over his shoulders, giving him the aspect of an old ex-member of the Convention or of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre after an attack of smallpox. His face and his hair made him appear well beyond sixty, but his robust figure, the energy and decision of his movements, and especially the penetrating keenness of a glance which he flashed about the church as soon as he entered, denoted a powerful constitution upon which the march of years had had little effect. He was evidently desirous to overtake the fair-haired youth, but he did not make the mistake of plunging after him into the thick of the throng massed about the altar, in which he suspected that the fugitive had tried to lose himself: making the circuit of the nave in the opposite direction, he had every chance, by passing rapidly through that much less crowded portion of the church, of reaching one of the issues on the other side as soon as his quarry; but, as has happened to many others than he, his too keen wit served him ill. As he passed a confessional he spied a kneeling form which reminded him of the person he was hunting. Attributing to another the shrewdness which he might perhaps have exhibited himself under similar circumstances, he fancied that his game, to throw him off the scent, had conceived the idea of presenting himself *ex abrupto* at the tribunal of penitence. During the time that he occupied in assuring himself of a mistaken identity, which a closer scrutiny did not confirm, he was distanced in the chase; that being the case, such an experienced hunter as he was knew better than to waste time in a useless pursuit; he realized that he had missed his opportunity and that the game was postponed.

He was on the point of leaving the church when, after a brief prelude on the organ, Signora Luigia's contralto, emitting some of its deepest notes, filled the air with the magnificent melody to which the *Litanies of the Virgin* are sung. The beauty of the voice, the beauty of the music, the beauty of the words of the sacred hymn, which the singer enunciated with perfect distinctness, seemed to make a profound impression on the stranger. Instead of holding to his purpose to withdraw, he went and took his station in the shadow of a pillar, where at first he remained on his feet; but, as the last notes of the canticle died away, he knelt, and he who had then glanced at his face would have noticed two great tears gliding down his cheeks. When the benediction had been pronounced and the greater part of the congregation had gone away, the unknown rose and wiped his eyes.

"What an idiot I am!" he said to himself.

Going out by the same door by which he had entered, he went up Rue Servandoni, stopped a moment in front of a closed shop, went on to Place Saint-Sulpice, entered one of the cabs standing there, and said to the driver:

"Rue de Provence, my good man, in a hurry: there's a good *pourboire* to be earned."

Arrived at the house to which he had given orders to be driven, he walked quickly by the concierge's box, with the manner of one who does not wish to be seen, and reached the servants' staircase; but the concierge, who did his duty conscientiously, came to his door and called out:

"Where is monsieur going?"

"To Madame de Saint-Estève's," replied the stranger, ill-humoredly.

And a moment later he rang at a rear door, which was opened by a negro.

"Is my aunt at home?" he asked.

"Oh! yes, missis at home!" replied the negro, embellishing his face with the most benignant smile at his command, which made him resemble a monkey shelling nuts.

Guided through several corridors which conveyed an idea of the great extent of the suite, the unknown soon reached the door of a salon, which was opened by the negro, who, at the same moment, announced "Monsieur de Saint-Hestève," as if the initial E were preceded by an H aspirate.

The salon into which the illustrious chief of the secret police was ushered was noticeable by reason of the splendor and still more by reason of the execrably bad taste of its furnishing and decoration. Three women of venerable age were seated about a small table, gravely engaged in a game of dominoes. Three glasses, a silver bowl drained dry, and an alcoholic odor whereby the sense of smell was unpleasantly assailed on entering the room, bore witness to the fact that the cult of the double-six was not the only cult held in honor there.

"Hail, mesdames," said the great detective, taking a seat; "delighted to find you together, for I have something to say to each of you in private."

"We'll listen to you in a minute," said La Saint-Estève, "but let us finish our game; it won't take long. *I play for four.*"

"Blank everywhere!" said one of the old crones.

"Domino!" cried La Saint-Estève, "and my game; you have four points between you, all the blanks are gone."

With that she put out her bony hand for the punch-ladle to fill the empty glasses; but, finding nothing in the bowl, instead of rising and ringing the bell, she played a tune with the ladle on the silver vessel. The negro answered the summons.

"Have something put in that," she said, passing him the bowl; "and bring a glass for monsieur."

"Thanks; I won't take anything," said Saint-Estève.

"I've had my allowance," said one of the women.

"As for me," said the other, "the doctors have put me on a milk diet, on account of my *gastripe.*"

"You're a chicken-hearted lot!" exclaimed La Saint-Estève. "Come, take all this away," she added, addressing the negro, "and look out I don't catch you listening at the door! Do you remember the drubbing?"

"Oh! me 'member very well!" said the negro, laughing with his shoulders; "me got no ears now!"

He left the room.

"Well, my puss, you have the floor," said La Saint-Estève to her nephew, after a stormy accounting had taken place between the three hags.

"Madame Fontaine," said the chief of the secret police, turning to one of the old women, whom, by reason of her inspired expression, her disordered gray hair, and her horribly threadbare green mantle, one would have been led to take for a blue-stocking at work on a fashion article, "you are neglecting us strangely; you make no reports to us nowadays, and, on the other hand, a good deal is coming to our ears about you. Monsieur le préfet is by no means inclined to allow your establishments to go on. I can only hold you up on the ground of the services you are supposed to render us, and although it isn't my trade to predict the future, as it is yours, I think I can promise you that, if you continue to be so chary of information, your fortune-telling shop will soon be closed."

"There you are!" retorted the pythoness; "you prevented my taking Mademoiselle Lenormand's apartment on Rue de Tournon. What sort of people does a body receive in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple quarter? Petty clerks, cooks, workmen, and grisettes! and you want me to come and tattle everything I learn from these people? You ought to have let me work on a large scale, then you'd have found out more."

"You mustn't say that, Madame Fontaine," interposed La Saint-Estève; "I send you some of my clients every day."

"Yes, just as I send you mine!"

"And no longer ago than four days," continued the matrimonial agent, "you had a call from an Italian woman I sent you; she's no grisette, I tell you; and living with a deputy who's against the government, too! You could make a report on that. But you don't like to take up a pen, and, since you had a row with your little counter-jumper because he ordered too many waistcoats of his tailor, no writing is done at your house."

"There is one matter, especially," added Saint-Estève, "that is mentioned very often in the reports we get about you: that is that vile creature that you introduce in the operation of the *great game.*"—See *The Involuntary Comedians*.

"What, Astaroth?" queried Madame Fontaine.

"Yes; that batrachian, that toad, if I must say the word, which you pretend to consult. It seems that, not long ago, a pregnant woman was so frightened by his hideous appearance—"

"Very well," interposed the sorceress, hastily, "if I've got to draw the cards now, without any other attraction, you might as well go ahead and ruin me at once, or guillotine me! Just because a fool of a woman gave birth to a dead child, must we do away with toads in nature? Then what did the good Lord make 'em for?"

"My dear madame," said Saint-Estève, "there was a time when you wouldn't have been so anxious about that collaboration. In 1617 a scientific man named Vanini was burned at Toulouse, just because they found a toad in a bottle in his house."

"Very true; but we live in an age of light," rejoined La Fontaine, jestingly, "and the police courts ain't so severe as that."

"As to you, Madame Nourrisson," said the chief of the secret police, addressing the other old woman, "people complain that you pluck your fruit too green; when a person has kept an establishment, as you have, she must know the laws and regulations; I am surprised that I have to remind you that, below the age of twenty-one, morality must be respected."

Madame Nourrisson had been, under the Empire, what Parent du Châtelet, in the interesting work in which he has learnedly investigated the hideous plague-spot prostitution, euphemistically calls a *dame de maison*. Later, she had set up, on Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc, the establishment for the sale of toilet-articles where the Esther affair was brewed—the affair mentioned by Maxime de Trailles to Desroches as having cost the banker Nucingen more than five hundred thousand francs. But on that occasion

Madame Nourrisson had concealed herself behind Madame de Saint-Estève, who, having the direction of the affair under Vautrin's inspiration, had made her confederate's place of business the headquarters of her operations for the time being. Between people who are connected by memories of complicity in such affairs, we can readily understand an extreme degree of familiarity. Consequently we shall not be surprised to hear Madame Nourrisson reply to the sermon addressed to her by Monsieur de Saint-Estève:

"You respected morality, didn't you, you great clown, when you sent that little seventeen-year-old Champenoise to me about 1809?"

"If it's thirty years ago that that folly was done in my name," replied the police official, "then it's thirty years since I became a wise man, for that was the last folly that ever petticoat succeeded in leading me into. However, my dear ladies, you will make such use as you choose of my advice. If anything goes wrong with you now, you can't complain that you haven't been called three times. As for you, my little aunt, what I have to say to you is confidential."

Being thus unceremoniously dismissed, the two matrons spoke of taking their leave.

"Shall I send out and call a cab for you?" Madame de Saint-Estève asked Madame Fontaine.

"No, indeed," replied the prophetess; "I'll walk, I've been advised to take exercise. I told my aide de camp, Madame Jamouillot, to call for me."

"And you, *Mame* Nourrisson?"

"Well, that is a good one!" said the dealer in toilet articles, "a cab to go from Rue de Provence to Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc! Why, I'm your neighbor."

The fact was that Madame Nourrisson had come in her every-day costume: white cap with yellow ribbons, tightly curled jet-black wig, silk apron, and calico dress with flowers on a dark-blue ground; and, as she gayly observed, there was little probability that anyone would think of kidnapping her *en route*.

Before passing to the interview about to take place between Monsieur de Saint-Estève and his aunt, it is necessary to say a few words by way of explanation.

In this public savior, who offered his services to Rastignac on the evening of the *émeute*, no reader can have failed to recognize the famous Jacques Collin, called Vautrin, one of the best-known and most carefully drawn figures of the HUMAN COMEDY. Shortly before the Revolution of 1830, that hero of the galleys, deeply wounded by the death of a person to whom he was attached, no longer felt the courage to continue the struggle he had waged against society for twenty-five years, and he had made his submission to De Granville, the procureur-général, under most dramatic circumstances, as narrated in the last part of *Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*. Since then, he had succeeded the illustrious Bibi-Lupin in the office of chief of the secret police, under the name of Monsieur de Saint-Estève; he had become the terror of the men who were once his confederates, and, by the ardor and energy with which he hunted them, had made for himself a reputation for skill and vigor to which there was nothing comparable in the annals of the police department. But, as he had explained to his former friend Colonel Franchessini, he had grown weary at last of this thief-hunting, in which, like a too experienced gambler, he had ceased to take any interest, because of the absence of chance and surprise in the game. For a few years he was able to endure his profession with patience, because of the repeated attacks and ambuscades which his former friends of the galleys, furious at what they called his treachery, had exerted all their ingenuity in directing against his person; but, discouraged by his adroitness and by his extraordinary luck, which constantly saved him from the dangerous aims of these conspiracies, his adversaries finally laid down their arms; thereupon, his occupation having lost all its attraction for him, he had thought of changing his field of activity, and of carrying into the sphere of politics his marvellous instinct for espionage, and his tremendous activity. Colonel Franchessini had not failed to see him again after his interview with Rastignac, and the former boarder at the Vauquer boarding-house was not the man to underestimate the value of the suggestions made by the minister touching the exaggerated bourgeois respectability beneath which he sought to bury the compromising memories that weighed upon his life.

"Aha!" he said, "so the pupil has gone ahead of the master? His advice certainly deserves consideration. I will think of it."

He had thought of it, and he was still under the influence of a prolonged period of meditation, during which he had carefully scrutinized the plan that had been transmitted to him, when, as we have seen, he called upon his aunt Jacqueline Collin, otherwise called Madame de Saint-Estève, a *nom de guerre* adopted by both, which, while serving the formidable couple as a mask for their past, left undisturbed the idea of the near relationship by which they were united. While actively concerned in many of her nephew's enterprises, Jacqueline Collin had also had a passably adventurous life of her own, and, on the occasion of one of Vautrin's numerous skirmishes with the law, an examining magistrate one day thus summed up the far from edifying antecedents of his honored aunt, on the authority of memoranda furnished by the police, which there is every reason to consider accurate:

"She is evidently a very clever receiver of stolen property, for there is no proof against her. After the death of Marat, whose mistress she was, she belonged to a chemist who was sentenced to death for counterfeiting in the year VIII.—1799.—She appeared as a witness at his trial. As a result of that connection she acquired a dangerous store of knowledge of toxicology. She dealt in toilet articles from the year IX. to 1805. She was imprisoned for two years, in 1807 and 1808, for debauching girls under age. At that time you, Jacques Collin, were prosecuted for forgery; you had left the banking-house in which your aunt had found a place for you as clerk, thanks to the education you had received and the patronage she enjoyed from persons to whose depraved tastes she furnished victims."

Since the time when that edifying biography was placed before her nephew's eyes, Jacqueline Collin had increased her means of livelihood, without ever again falling into the clutches of the law, and when Vautrin abdicated, she had not donned so immaculate a robe of innocence as his. But having, like him, attained great wealth, she had been careful in her choice of *affairs*, had kept always at a respectful distance from the Penal Code, and, behind the show-windows of an almost respectable occupation, she had secretly carried on divers more or less subterranean industries to which she continued to devote a truly infernal intelligence and activity.

Desroches has already told us that the more or less matrimonial agency which had suggested itself to Madame de Saint-Estève was located on Rue de Provence, and we may add that, being designed upon a large scale, the agency occupied the whole first floor of one of those enormous houses which spring from the earth as if by enchantment under the wand of the Parisian contractor. Almost before they are finished—on credit—these houses are filled up with tenants of one sort or another, at any price, with a view of finding purchasers who can be induced to buy them; if they happen to place their hand upon a dupe, they make what is called a *great coup;* if, on the contrary, the purchaser is made of harder material, they are satisfied to recoup the money they have spent, with a few thousand francs' profit, provided always, that while the house is under construction, the speculation is not complicated by one of those failures which are among the most frequent and least unexpected incidents of the building trade. Lorettes, brokers, still-born insurance companies, newspapers destined to perish in the prime of life, managing boards of impossible railways, banking-houses where money is borrowed instead of being lent, bureaux of public information which barely attain for themselves the publicity in which they deal; in a word, every variety of business and undertaking of doubtful character forms the temporary population of these *republics*. As they are built for immediate effect, it matters little that, at the end of a few months, as the result of a settling of the walls that interferes with the play of the windows, of cracks between the panels of the doors, of yawning fissures in the floors, of leaks caused by the privies and by the pipes for rain-water and sink-water, these card palaces have become well-nigh uninhabitable! that is the affair of the purchaser, who, after making thorough repairs, is at liberty to make a better selection of tenants and raise his rents.

Having entered into possession of her apartment before that period of decadence, Madame de Saint-Estève had procured comfortable quarters at a very low price; and her exertions and her adroit management soon produced handsome results, to say nothing of the profits of other secret affairs. It is hardly necessary to say that Madame de Saint-Estève, considering the charlatan's trick of advertising beneath her dignity, left it to her rivals and never caused the advantages of her *cabinet* to be set forth on the fourth page of the newspapers. This disdain, which showed commendable prudence on her part in view of the obscure passages of her past, had guided her to the discovery of divers ingenious manœuvres by means of which she attracted attention to her establishment in a less vulgar way. In the provinces, and even in foreign countries, she had shrewd commercial travellers, who distributed with due discretion a prospectus drawn up by Gaudissart, one of the most remarkable *puffistes* of modern times. The apparent aim of this prospectus was to offer the services of an exclusively commercial agency, which, in consideration of a very moderate remittance, would undertake to select and purchase, in Paris, wedding trousseaux *suited to all dowries and all fortunes*. Only in a humble *Nota bene*, after a list with approximate prices of the articles that go to make up a trousseau, divided into first, second, third, and fourth classes, much like the service at funerals, did Madame de Saint-Estève hint that she was "able, by reason of her connections in the best society, to arrange opportunities for meeting between unmarried persons."

At Paris, Madame de Saint-Estève herself undertook to appeal to public credulity, and her combinations were no less clever than varied. She had made a bargain with a liveryman by the terms of which she was to have two or three handsome carriages standing at her door for several hours almost every day. In her reception-room, too, pretended clients of both sexes, elegantly dressed and apparently impatient for an audience, relieved one another in such a way as to convey the idea of a constant throng; and we can imagine whether, in the conversation of these trusty retainers of the establishment, who pretended not to know one another, the virtues and the eminent capacity of Madame de Saint-Estève were sufficiently exalted. By means of moderate contributions for the poor and for the charitable work of Notre-Dame de Lorette, her parish church, the clever old campaigner managed to obtain visits from several priests, who served as guarantors of her moral character and of the importance of her matrimonial ramifications. Another shrewd device of hers was to obtain regularly from the market-women a list of all the fashionable marriages to be celebrated in Paris, and then to appear at the wedding ceremony, as if she were invited, richly dressed, with a carriage and servants, thus conveying the impression that she was not altogether a stranger to the union which she honored with her presence.

One day, however, an unaccommodating family had rebelled at the idea of serving as a prospectus for her, and had treated her somewhat roughly; whereupon she had become very cautious in the use of that method, for which she substituted a trick much less hazardous and less open to interference. Having an acquaintance of many years' standing with Madame Fontaine, for there is a natural affinity between all these apocryphal industries, she had proposed to her a sort of partnership for working upon Parisian gullibility; and this is how the two sibyls arranged matters. In at least eight cases out of ten, where women consult a fortune-teller, the *marriage* question is at the bottom of their curiosity. And so, when the prophetess informed one of her clients, in accordance with the consecrated formula, that she would soon be sought in marriage by a *fair* or a *dark* youth, she was careful to add: "But the marriage cannot be brought about except through the medium of Madame de Saint-Estève, a woman of great wealth and perfectly respectable, who lives on Rue de Provence, Chaussée d'Antin, and who has a taste for match-making;" and when Madame de Saint-Estève, in her turn, was arranging a marriage, she never failed to say, however little belief she may have had that the suggestion would be accepted: "By the way, consult the celebrated Madame Fontaine, Rue Vieille-du-Temple, concerning the future of this affair: her reputation with the cards is European; she never makes a mistake; and if she tells you that I am making a good match for you, you can go ahead with perfect safety." It is not difficult to understand why the Numa of Petite Rue Sainte-Anne should have taken a woman so full of expedients for his Egeria. Rastignac had been incorrectly informed that the aunt and the nephew kept house together; but it was the fact that Vautrin allowed hardly a day to pass, when his own occupations permitted, without calling upon his venerable relative, shrouding his visits in secrecy as far as possible. For many years, whenever anything of serious importance occurred in his life, Jacqueline Collin had been within reach, to give counsel, and often to lend a hand as well.

"My dear mother," said Vautrin, beginning the conversation for which he had come, "I have so many things to tell you that I don't know where to begin."

"I believe you! it's almost a week since I saw you."

"In the first place, it's as well that you should know that I just missed a magnificent stroke."

"Of what sort?" asked Jacqueline.

"In the line of my beastly trade; but the game was worth the candle this time. You remember that little Prussian engraver I sent you to Berlin for?"

"Who counterfeited Bank of Vienna notes so perfectly?" said La Saint-Estève, completing the description.

"Well, not an hour ago, as I was passing a fruit shop on Rue Servandoni, where I had been to see one of my agents who is sick, I thought that I recognized my man engaged in buying a piece of Brie cheese, which the woman was wrapping in paper for him."

"It would seem," observed Jacqueline, "that knowing the banks so well hasn't made him rich."

"My first impulse," continued Vautrin, "was to rush into the shop, the door of which was closed, and grab my rascal by the collar; but, as I hadn't a full view of his face, I was afraid of making a mistake. He had his eyes open apparently; he noticed that somebody was watching him through the glass, and zest! he ran into the fruit-woman's back shop, where I lost sight of him!"

"That's what comes of wearing that long hair and that fringe of beard, old man; the game scents you at a hundred yards!"

"But you know that this affectation of mine of never disguising myself is the one thing that produces the most effect on my customers: 'He must be mighty sure of his aim,' they all say, 'to despise the tricks of costume!' Nothing has done so much to make me popular."

"Well," said Jacqueline, "your man's in the back shop?"

"I glanced hastily about to see how the land lay," continued Vautrin. "The shop was part of a house with a passage on one side; at the end of the passage, the gate of which was open, was a small yard on which the back shop probably opened: so, if my fellow didn't stay in the house, I had all the exits guarded. A quarter of an hour or more passed; that's a long while when you're waiting. I looked into the shop, but could see no sign of my man; three persons had gone in, and the woman waited on them without appearing to suspect that anyone was watching outside; not a glance out of the corner of her eye, not the slightest suspicious movement. 'Well,' I said to myself at last, 'he must be a lodger in the house; otherwise his exit by the back door would have made more impression on the woman.' So I decided to go into the shop to obtain information. Bah! I had hardly crossed the threshold, when I heard the bird flying away."

"You were in too much of a hurry, my dear boy," said La Saint-Estève; "and yet you said to me one day: 'police means patience.'"

"I didn't stop to ask for information," continued Vautrin, "but started in pursuit. Just opposite the end of Rue Servandoni, which was the name of the architect who built Saint-Sulpice, there is a door of the church; it was open on account of the service of the *month of Marie*, which is held every evening. My bird, having a lead on me, ran through that door and lost himself so effectually in the crowd, that when I entered the church I couldn't see him."

"Well," said La Saint-Estève "I ain't sorry that the little fellow gave you the slip; for my part, I'm always a little interested in counterfeiters; it's a pretty, neat little crime, no bloodshed, and no wrong done to anyone except those vile cowards of governments."

"And a banking house in Frankfort ruined by his counterfeit notes!"

"You can say what you like, I'd give more for such a fellow than for your Lucien de Rubempré, who did nothing but spend all we had, whereas if you'd had a worker under your cloak such as we had in the good old times!—"

"Notwithstanding your admiration for him, you will go to the fruit-woman's to-morrow all the same and find out something about him; she must know him, for she helped his escape. When I returned to the shop, I found door and shutters closed. I had wasted my time in the church—"

"Listening to a singer, I'll bet," La Saint-Estève interrupted him.

"Yes; how do you know?"

"*Parbleu!* all Paris is running to hear her," replied Jacqueline, "and then I know her in a business way."

"What! that voice that moved me so deeply, that took fifty years off my life and carried me back to the day of my first communion with the good fathers of the Oratoire, where I was brought up; that woman who made me weep and transformed me into a pious man for five minutes,—do you mean to say that you have her on your books?"

"Yes," said La Saint-Estève, carelessly, "I have a scheme on foot in which she's interested: I am arranging for her to go on the stage."

"The deuce! so you're going to set up a dramatic agency, too! you haven't enough to do with your marriages, eh?"

"This is the whole story in two words, my boy. She's an Italian, as beautiful as the day, who came from Rome to Paris with an idiot of a sculptor who hasn't a suspicion that she's mad with love of him; and this Joseph cares so little for her that, although he had her before his eyes posing for one of his statues, he has still to say his first word of love to her!"

"He's a man who ought to rise high in his art," observed Jacques Collin, "with such contempt for women and such strength of character."

"To prove it," replied Jacqueline, "he's just dropped his art to be elected a deputy: he's the man that I told La Fontaine just now that she could have written you something about. I sent my foreigner to her, and she consulted the cards for her about this frigid lover."

"But how did you come to know her?"

"Through old Ronquerolles. He went to the sculptor's one day about a duel in which he was one of the seconds, and he saw this treasure of a woman and became all *Nucingen* over her."

"Thereupon you undertook to negotiate for him."

"You have it. The poor man had already been wasting his time for over a month; when I took the affair in hand, I made inquiries: I learned that the beauty belongs to the sisterhood of the Virgin; on that I called on her in the character of a lady from one of the charitable societies; and just see what luck I had to begin with! the sculptor was away from Paris looking after his election as deputy—"

"I am not at all worried about you; and yet, for a woman devoted to charity to procure a theatrical engagement—"

"After two visits," continued La Saint-Estève, "I drew out all her little secrets; that she could not contain herself any longer with that man of marble; that she did not wish to owe him anything, and that, having studied for the stage, she would leave his house at once if she had any way of getting an engagement. So one day I arrived all out of breath, and told her that one of my friends, a great nobleman, venerable by reason of his virtues and his years, to whom I had spoken of her, would undertake to procure an engagement for her; and I asked permission to bring him to see her."

"That was the proper order," said Collin.

"Yes; but she was as suspicious as the devil and not so fully decided as she said to leave her sculptor, so she put me off from day to day; at last, to make her go forward, I had to hint to her that she'd better go and consult La Fontaine, which she was very ready to do; but, in spite of the cards, she is still on her guard and the affair is dragging along, because she has seen her Chinaman again; he's been elected and has come back to Paris. There's nothing to be said; we must go ahead carefully now; if he should happen to be angry with me for enticing a woman away from him, whom he may want, perhaps, as soon as he finds that she doesn't want him, we should have a strong man to deal with; and that selfish old fool of a Ronquerolles, who is nothing but a peer of France after all, wouldn't be the best kind of a defence against the attacks of a deputy."

"That old rake of a Ronquerolles," said Jacques Collin, "isn't the protector your protégée needs; she is virtuous, and we must let her remain virtuous; I myself know an eminently respectable man who will procure her an engagement in all seriousness and good faith, and, without any hidden motive, will assure her a glorious future."

"You know such phenomenons as that? I shouldn't be sorry to know their addresses; I'd go and leave my card on them."

"Very well, Petite Rue Saint-Anne, near Quai des Orfévres: there you'll find one of them whom you know already."

"Are you quizzing me?"* cried La Saint-Estève, her astonishment causing a relapse into thieves' slang, which she could speak with much fluency.

"No, I am speaking seriously: that woman moved me deeply, I am interested in her, and then I have another reason—"

Thereupon Vautrin described his overture to Rastignac, the intervention of Colonel Franchessini, the minister's reply, and his transcendent theory concerning his social reclassification.

"See how that little hypocrite is trying to teach his grandam!" cried Jacqueline Collin.

"He's in the right," replied Vautrin; "the woman was all we needed, and you supply her."

"Yes, but it will cost the eyes out of your head."

"What is our money for? We have no heirs; you don't feel, I fancy, as if you must found a hospital, or prizes for virtue?"

"Not such *a flat!*" rejoined La Saint-Estève; "besides, my Jacques, you know very well that I never haggled with you; but there's one difficulty that I think of; this woman's as proud as the Roman that she is, and your damned business—"

---

* *Planches-tu?* The verb *plancher* is seldom used, except as a slang synonym for *se moquer*.

"You see yourself," said Jacques Collin, earnestly, "that I must, at any cost, get out of a life in which there are such insults to be anticipated. But never fear, I am in a position to ward off the one you have in mind. For the purposes of my trade I am authorized to make up in any costume I please, and I am a fair actor, as you remember. To-morrow I can put a rainbow of decorations in my button-hole, and take up my quarters in a hotel under any aristocratic name that I choose to assume; for so far as the police are concerned the license of the carnival lasts the whole year. I have thought it over already. I know the man I shall be. You can tell the Italian that Count Halphertius, a great Swedish nobleman, fond of music and philanthropy, is interested in her future; and I will, in fact, give her a house, I will hold strictly to the bargain of virtuous disinterestedness for which you will be my surety; in short, I will become her avowed patron. As for the engagement she desires, and which I also desire for her, for my plans for the future require that she should be resplendent and renowned, we should cease to be Jacques and Jacqueline if, with her talent and with money and determination, we should fail to obtain it for her."

"Now we must find out if Rastignac will think that you have kept to the bargain; what he wanted was that Monsieur de Saint-Estève, chief of the secret police, should paint his face."

"Oh! no, old lady! There's no Saint-Estève any more, no Jacques Collin, no Vautrin, no Trompe-la-Mort, no Carlos Herrera; there is a strong, vigorous, powerful intellect that offers the government its assistance: I bring it down from the North, baptize it with a foreign name, and by so doing I become only the better fitted for the duties of political and diplomatic police agent, to which I propose to devote my energies."

"You are getting on! you are getting on! it's wonderful; but first of all you must get possession of this jewel that's to show you off, and we haven't got her yet."

"That's no difficulty; I have seen you at work, and when you will you can."

"I will keep at work," said Jacqueline, modestly. "Come and see me to-morrow night, perhaps we shall have made some progress."

"And meanwhile," said Vautrin, "don't forget the fruit-woman on Rue Servandoni, Number 12, where you are to go and find out something. That capture, in which a foreign government is interested, will have a political perfume which will help materially in bringing about the result I want to reach."

"I'll give you a good account of the fruit-woman," replied La Saint-Estève; "but as to the other matter, that's more delicate; we must be careful and not rush things."

"*Carte blanche!*" said Vautrin; "I have never found you unequal to any mission, however difficult it might be; so good-night; I will see you to-morrow."

The next day Vautrin received the following note in his office on Petite Rue Sainte-Anne:

"MY OLD BOY,

"You haven't any reason to complain and everything's going to suit you. Early this morning they told me a lady wanted to speak to me. Who should I see come in? our foreigner, whom I gave my address to in case she had anything important to tell me. As her Joseph talked freely enough to her last night about his plan of parting from her, the dear girl didn't sleep a wink all night, and her little head's in such a fever that here she is in my house begging me to put her in communication with my *venerable man*, whom she has decided to trust herself to, *if he's an honorable man*, because her self-esteem won't let her owe anything more to that iceberg, who despises her, so she says. So come at once in the new skin you've chosen, and then it's your business to worm yourself into the charmer's heart.

"Your affectionate aunt,
"J. C. DE SAINT-ESTEVE."

Vautrin replied:

"I will be with you to-night at nine. I trust that I shall exhibit such a pleasant transformation in my personal appearance, that you would find it hard to recognize me at the first glance, if I hadn't told you the name by which I shall be announced. I have already made good progress in the matter of the engagement, and I shall be able to speak of it in a way that will give the fair one an exalted idea of *her papa's* influence. During the day, sell enough consols and shares to give us a good-sized sum; we shall need ready-money. I will do the same. Till this evening then.

"Your nephew and friend,
"SAINT-ESTEVE."

*

Vautrin arrived at his aunt's at the precise hour he had himself appointed. On this occasion he went up the main staircase and caused himself to be announced as Count Halphertius by the negro, who did not recognize him. Prepared as she was for the metamorphosis, Jacqueline Collin was speechless with amazement in presence of that great actor, who had made himself over from head to foot. His wig à la Franklin had become a powdered *Titus;* his eyebrows and his whiskers, trimmed *en côtelette,* in the style of the Empire, had been dyed a dark brown and formed a striking contrast to the snow on top of his head; and, with false moustaches of the same color, imparted to his naturally ignoble face something imposing and unique, which might, in case of need, be taken for distinction. A high black satin stock gave stateliness to the carriage of his head. In the buttonhole of a blue coat, buttoned across his chest, blazed a ribbon in which the colors of all the famous orders of Europe were blended. A yellow piqué waistcoat effected a harmonious transition from the aforesaid coat to a pair of pearl-gray trowsers; patent-leather boots and straw-colored gloves completed this costume, which aimed to be négligé in its elegance; the powder, whose last royal supporters could at that time be counted on one's fingers, denoted the old foreign diplomatist, and served well as a clever corrective in a costume which, but for that, might have seemed a little juvenile.

After a few moments devoted to admiration of his disguise, Vautrin asked:

"Is *she* here?"

"Yes," said La Saint-Estève; "the angel went to her room half an hour ago to tell her beads—because she can no longer attend the service of the *month of Marie.* But she is waiting impatiently for you to call on account of the way I've been singing your praises all day."

"And how does she feel in your house? Doesn't she regret the course she has taken?"

"Even if she did, she has too much pride to show it; besides, I have slyly wormed myself into her confidence, and then she's one of the determined characters that never look back when they've once started."

"The best joke is," said Vautrin, "that her deputy, who is much worried about her, has been recommended to me by monsieur le préfet, to help him in his search."

"He does care for her, then?"

"He hasn't any love for her, but he considers that he held her in trust, and he's afraid that she may have thought of killing herself or have fallen into the hands of some scheming woman. Do you know, if it hadn't been for my fatherly intervention, he'd have put his finger on the sore?"

"What answer did you give the gull?"

"Naturally, I gave him little hope; but I was really sorry not to be able to do any part of what he asked me; in the first place, I felt sympathy for him: he's a man of agreeable manners, with an energetic and intelligent air, and I am inclined to think that messieurs the ministers will not have a very comfortable opponent in him."

"So much the worse for him," said La Saint-Estève, "he needn't have driven the dear little creature to extremities. By the way! what about this engagement for which you told me that you had already put the irons in the fire?"

"You know what luck is, my old puss," replied Vautrin, unfolding a newspaper: "good or bad, it always comes in gusts. This morning, after receiving your letter, which told me such excellent news, I opened this theatrical newspaper and I read these words: 'The season at the Italian theatre in London, so unpromisingly inaugurated by the lawsuit which has brought to light the pecuniary embarrassment with which the management of Sir Francis Drake is struggling, seems to be very seriously imperilled by the severe indisposition of La Serboni, which is likely to keep her from the stage for an indefinite time. Sir Francis arrived yesterday at the Hôtel des Princes, Rue de Richelieu, having come to Paris in search of the two things he needs; a prima-donna and funds. But is not the excellent *impresario* reasoning in a circle? No funds, no prima-donna; no prima-donna, no funds! Let us hope, however, that he will find a way to escape that dilemma; for

Sir Francis Drake has the reputation of an honorable and intelligent man, and all doors cannot remain closed to such a reputation.' "

"Those newspaper fellows know a lot about the world!" said La Saint-Estève, with a knowing look; "the idea of doors opening to a man because he is honorable and intelligent!"

"Under the circumstances, the remark was not altogether misplaced," replied Vautrin; "for, as soon as I read the article, I fixed myself up as you see me, took a cab, and presented myself at the address mentioned."

"'Sir Francis Drake?'

"'I don't know whether he can receive monsieur,' said a servant, coming forward as I knocked; a sort of French valet de chambre, who seemed to me to have been stationed there to make the same reply to all comers; 'he is with the Baron de Nucingen.'

"I pretended to look through a wallet—in which I allowed him to see a goodly number of banknotes—for a card which was not there."

"'Well,' I said, with a slight German accent and sprinkling my sentences with an occasional German idiom, 'I am Count Halphertius, of Sweden. Say to Sir Francis Drake that I came to talk to him on business. I am going to the Bourse to give some orders to my broker, and I will return in half an hour.'

"That said, in a most aristocratic tone, I returned to my carriage. I had not put my foot on the step, when the *skirmisher* came running after me to say that he had made a mistake, that the Baron de Nucingen had gone, and that his master could receive me at once."

"They try to be smart with us!" exclaimed La Saint-Estève, shrugging her shoulders.

"Sir Francis Drake," continued Vautrin, "is an Englishman, very bald, with a red nose and large, protruding, yellow teeth. He received me with cold politeness, asking me in good French what the business was concerning which I wished to talk with him.

"'As I was breakfasting at the Café de Paris a few moments ago,' I replied, 'I read this.'

"And I handed him the paper, pointing to the article in question.

"'It is inconceivable,' said the *impresario*, returning the paper, 'how these fellows take liberties with a man's credit!'

"'Doesn't the reporter know what he is talking about? are you not in need of funds?'

"'You must understand, monsieur, that I should not, in any event, appeal to capital through the medium of a theatrical newspaper.'

"'Very well! In that case, we have nothing to say to each other. I came here to put some money into your enterprise.'

"'I should much prefer,' said the Englishman, 'to have you offer me a prima-donna.'

"'I offer both,' I replied, resuming my seat; 'one depending on the other.'

"'A known artist?' inquired the manager.

"'Absolutely unknown,' I replied, 'she has never appeared on any stage.'

"'Hum! that's very risky,' said the manager, in a conceited tone; 'the patrons of talents in embryo are often sadly deceived.'

"'I offer a contribution of a hundred thousand francs if you will simply take the trouble to listen to my nightingale.'

"'That would be a great deal for the trouble I should take, and very little for the relief of my enterprise, assuming that I am as embarrassed as they say.'

"'Then listen to us for nothing, and if we suit you and you deal honorably with us, I will double the amount.'

"'You speak with a frankness that inspires confidence. Of what nationality is the young artist?'

"'Roman—from Rome, a pure-blooded Italian and very beautiful; you can judge my interest in her; I was mad over her just from hearing her sing at a distance in a church. I didn't see her till later.'

"'But I had an idea that women didn't sing in churches in Italy,' said the *impresario*."

"What of that?" said La Saint-Estève, judiciously, "ain't there any churches anywhere but Italy?"

"Exactly," replied Vautrin; "it seemed to me that, to give an air of probability to the character I had assumed and the step I was taking, it would be well for me to exhibit myself in an eccentric light;

so I caught on the bound the opportunity to start a German quarrel, in the full sense of the phrase.

"'I observe, monsieur,' I retorted, in a tone that was by no means reassuring, 'that you do me the honor to doubt my word.'

"'What!' said the Englishman, in amazement, 'why, nothing was farther from my thought.'

"'It is quite clear, however,' I replied; 'I say to you: "I heard the signora sing in a church;" you say to me: "Women don't sing in churches in Italy;" the plain implication being that I did not hear her.'

"'But you may have heard her in some other country!'

"'You ought to have thought of that,' I continued, in the same belligerent tone, 'before making your extraordinary remark. However, I see that we cannot agree; the signora can wait till the opening of the Theâtre-Italien here in Paris, in October; artists have a much better chance to make themselves known there; so I have the honor to salute you, Monsieur Drake.'

"And that time I acted as if I really intended to go."

"A pretty rôle prettily played!" said La Saint-Estève.

In all the most hazardous enterprises that the aunt and nephew had undertaken in common, they had always paid special attention to the artistic side.

"To cut the story short," said Vautrin, "my man being thus brought to book, we parted after agreeing to the following terms: Three hundred thousand francs to be put into the business, fifty thousand francs salary for the balance of the season, assuming that her voice is satisfactory; and, in order to give Sir Francis Drake an opportunity to form an opinion of her talent, I made an appointment for to-morrow at two o'clock, at Pape's, where he will be, with two or three friends whom I authorized him to bring. We shall seem to be there to buy a piano. I said, still for the sake of appearances, that the young woman might be frightened by the solemnity of an appointment made for the purpose, and that in that way we should be surer of hearing her at her best."

"But look you, my boy," said Jacqueline, "a hundred thousand crowns is a lot of money!"

"Just the amount I received from the estate of poor Lucien de Rubempré," rejoined Vautrin, indifferently. "Besides, I have thought it all over. With plenty of money Sir Francis Drake may have a very good season; my secretary, Théodore Calvi,—See *The Last Incarnation of Vautrin*,—who is devoted to me in life or death, is thoroughly at home in financial matters; I have stipulated that he shall be treasurer, and he'll keep an eye on my contribution. Now, there is only one thing that disturbs me: Signora Luigia made a deep impression on me, but I'm no connoisseur, and artists may perhaps form an entirely different opinion from mine."

"Artists have passed judgment on her, my chicken, and her sculptor didn't think of letting her go till he had had one Jacques Bricheteau hear her sing—an organist here in Paris and a musician through and through; they were at Saint-Sulpice with you the night of your chase, and the organist said—these are his very words—that the woman has sixty thousand francs in her voice, whenever she chooses to take it."

"Jacques Bricheteau!" said Vautrin, "why, I know him: there's a man of that name employed in one of the departments at the prefecture."

"In that case," said La Saint-Estève, "it's your nightingale's fate to be protected by the police!"

"No," said Vautrin, "I remember; this Jacques Bricheteau is a health inspector who has just been *thanked* for meddling in politics. Well," he added, "suppose we proceed to the presentation? The evening is getting on."

Jacqueline Collin had no sooner left the room to summon Luigia, than there was a great uproar in the reception-room adjoining. Almost at the same moment the door suddenly flew open, and, notwithstanding the desperate resistance of the negro, who had strict orders to admit no one that evening, an individual entered, whose arrival was inopportune at least, if it was not altogether unexpected. Despite his insolently aristocratic bearing and expression, the newcomer being surprised by a stranger in such violent behavior, was plainly embarrassed for a moment, and Vautrin was charitable enough to make his situation even more humiliating by saying to him, with true Teutonic good-nature:

"Is monsieur a great friend of Madame de Saint-Estève?"

"I have something very important to say to her," replied the intruder, "and that servant's such a fool that he can't tell whether she's at home or not."

"I can certify that she is not," rejoined the pretended Halphertius; "I have been waiting for her more than an hour past the time she appointed. She's a mad creature, and I think she's at the theatre, for the negro told me her nephew sent her a ticket."

"Whenever she returns, I must speak to her," said the new arrival, taking an easy-chair and installing himself therein.

"I shall not wait any longer," said Vautrin.

He bowed and prepared to leave the room. At that moment La Saint-Estève appeared. Warned by the negro, she had put on a hat and thrown a shawl over her shoulders, to make it appear that she had just come in.

"Well, upon my word!" said she, feigning astonishment, "Monsieur de Ronquerolles at my house, at this time of night!"

"The devil take you for shouting my name like that!" said her client, in an undertone.

Vautrin retraced his steps to take part in the comedy, and said, as he approached the marquis, with the most obsequious air:

"Monsieur le Marquis de Ronquerolles, peer of France, and formerly an ambassador! I am charmed to have passed a moment with so well-known a statesman and so accomplished a diplomatist."

He bowed respectfully, and again started for the door.

"What, baron, are you going?" cried La Saint-Estève, trying to assume the tone and manner of a dowager of Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"Yes; monsieur le marquis has much to say to you. I will return to-morrow at eleven o'clock, but be prompt."

"Very well, to-morrow at eleven," said La Saint-Estève; "I can tell you, by the way, that your matters are progressing finely, you are altogether reconciled to your bride that is to be."

Vautrin bowed again and left the room.

"Who is that original?" asked Ronquerolles.

"A Prussian baron I have found a wife for," replied La Saint-Estève. "Well," she added, "is there anything new that you are so determined to speak with me?"

"Yes, and something you ought to know! The girl left the sculptor's house this morning."

"Nonsense," said Jacqueline, "who told you that?"

"My valet, who has talked with the charwoman."

"Aha! it seems that there are several of us at work," said La Saint-Estève, grasping the opportunity to pick a quarrel.

"Well, my dear woman, you don't make any progress; here it is nearly a month since the thing was begun—"

"You seem to think that such things are just tossed into a mould, and that Italian women are made of tinder like your Parisian lorettes; and you're so generous, too!"

"What's that? you've already extorted more than three thousand-franc notes from me for fictitious expenses!"

"A pretty sell! and what about the engagement you undertook to obtain?"

"Can I make the Théâtre-Italien open its door expressly for that foolish creature? If she had been willing to make her début at the Opera!"

"There's a Théâtre-Italien in London, if there doesn't happen to be one in Paris at this moment, and the manager is here now, looking for a leading lady."

"I saw all that in the newspapers; but I should have looked well before negotiating with a man on the verge of bankruptcy!"

"Well, that's a chance all the same; suppose you help the man out, and then, through gratitude—"

"That's just it," said the marquis, shrugging his shoulders; "a little matter of five hundred thousand francs, which is what *La Torpille* cost Nucingen!"

"My little father, a man wants a woman or he doesn't want her. Esther had been on the street; the Italian is as beautiful as she ever was, and she's *green seal* for virtue! superb talent, too; those three thousand-franc notes that you've treated us to, what are they to make so much fuss about?"

"Have you undertaken the negotiation for me, yes or no?"

"Yes, and I was to have it all in my hands, and if I had thought I should have the honor of being overlooked by your valet, I'd have told you to apply somewhere else; I don't work on the double lay myself."

"But, except for that boy, would you have found out what I have just told you, you old bag of vanity?"

"Did he tell you the rest?"

"What do you mean by the rest?" said the marquis, quickly.

"Why, who took the bird from its nest, and what cage is't in at this present hour of this day?"

"Why, do you know?"

"If I don't know, I suspect."

"Tell me, then!" cried Ronquerolles, greatly excited.

"You know all the lions, young and old, of the Parisian menagerie, and you must have heard of Count Halphertius, a Swedish nobleman, tremendously rich, who's just landed here."

"This is the first time I ever heard the name."

"You must ask your valet about him, he'll tell you."

"Nonsense! don't play cunning; you say that this Count Halphertius?—"

"Is music-mad, and *woman-mad* à la Nucingen."

"And you think that Luigia has flown in that direction?"

"I know he's been fluttering round her; he went so far as to make me some magnificent propositions, and if you hadn't had my word—"

"Oh! of course, you are a lady of such exalted virtue!"

"You take it that way, do you?" said La Saint-Estève, feeling in her pocket and producing a wallet well filled with bank-notes; "I'll give you back your money, my boy, and beg you to clear out."

"Nonsense, nonsense, you wrong-headed creature!" replied the marquis, as she handed him three thousand-franc notes; "you know very well that I don't take back what I have given."

"And I don't keep what I haven't earned. You are *sold*, monsieur le marquis. I do business for Count Halphertius; I am the one who carried off your beauty; indeed, she's concealed here in my apartment, and to-morrow morning I send her off with the Swede to London, where I've got hold of a magnificent engagement for her."

"Oh, no! oh, no! I don't think you are capable of deceiving me," said Ronquerolles, mistaking for sarcasm the truth which was discharged at him point-blank in that guise; "we are old acquaintances, you know. Come, take back these notes, and tell me frankly what you think of the competition of this rich foreigner."

"Why, I have told you: he's a man who's rich enough not to stick at any sacrifice, and I know he's had several talks with Madame Nourrisson."

"Then it was that old carcass from whom you learned all these details?"

"Madame Nourrisson is my friend," said La Saint-Estève, with dignity; "we may both be trying to gain the same object, but that's no reason for speaking ill of her in my presence."

"But did she tell you where this Count Halphertius lives?" demanded the marquis, impatiently.

"No; but I know he was to start for London yesterday; that's why I walked up and down in front of your house, to put a flea in your ear."

"It's very evident that the Italian has gone to join him."

"You may very well be right."

"A nicely managed business," said Ronquerolles, rising.

"I say!" said La Saint-Estève, insolently, "did you never have any set-backs in your diplomatic career?"

"Do you expect to learn anything more definite?"

"I will work," said Jacqueline.

That was her formula for promising her assistance.

"But no double game!" cried the marquis; "you know I am not naturally a joker."

"Is that the judgment of the Court of Peers?" queried La Saint-Estève, who was not easily awed.

"You might as well ask your nephew to assist in your search," said Ronquerolles, paying no heed to the impertinence.

"Yes," said Jacqueline, "I don't think it would be a bad idea to take him into the affair, but without mentioning your name, of course."

"And if he should ever need any support with his prefect, you know that I'm as warm a friend as I am a dangerous enemy."

Thereupon La Saint-Estève and her client parted, and, after the enemy's carriage was heard driving away, the virtuous dame had no need to go in search of her nephew; he had made the circuit of the apartment by a back passage and had returned to the room adjoining the salon, from which he had overheard everything.

"You fooled him handsomely!" said Vautrin. "We shall need to hold him with his beak in the water by choice bits of information for a few days; but go now and fetch our Helen, for it is very nearly if not quite too late for me to be presented to her."

"Never fear, I'll arrange that," said La Saint-Estève, who returned a moment later with the beautiful housekeeper.

"Signora Luigia—Monsieur le Comte Halphertius!" she said, introducing the future co-workers to each other.

"Signora," said Vautrin, in a most respectful tone, "my friend, Madame de Saint-Estève, tells me that you allow me to take an interest in your affairs."

"Madame de Saint-Estève has mentioned you to me as a man of excellent judgment in matters of art," replied Luigia, who had acquired great facility in speaking our language.

"That is to say, I am passionately devoted to art, and I do my utmost with my fortune to advance its interests. You have very great talent, madame!"

"That is something to be ascertained later, if I am fortunate enough to appear in public."

"You can appear whenever you will. I have seen the manager of the Italian theatre in London; we have agreed that he is to hear you to-morrow."

"I am very grateful for all that you have been kind enough to do; but, before I accept your services, it is necessary that we should have a very frank understanding."

"Frankness is most agreeable to me," replied Vautrin.

"I am a poor, deserted creature," continued Luigia; "people say that I am passably good-looking, and, at all events, I am young; I am obliged, therefore, to respond with some distrust to all the kindly assiduities of which I may be the object. In France, I am told, such assiduities are very rarely disinterested."

"I can answer for the disinterestedness," said Vautrin; "but, as to keeping tongues from talking, that I won't answer for."

"Oh! as to tongues wagging, we must make up our mind to that," said La Saint-Estève; "monsieur le comte's age won't prevent gossip, for a younger man is more likely to be interested in a woman without having designs on her. In Paris the old fellows are all rascals."

"I have no designs," said Vautrin; "if I have the good fortune to be useful to the signora, whose talent I esteem above all else, she will allow me to be her friend; but if I should fail in due respect, she will be independent, by reason of that very talent, and she can turn me out of her house like a maid who steals from her."

"Do I understand, Monsieur le Comte, that you have been kind enough already to interest yourself in obtaining an engagement for me?"

"It is as good as made," said Vautrin; "you are to sing to-morrow, and if your voice pleases the manager of the Italian theatre of London, you are to have fifty thousand francs for the rest of the season."

"It is like a dream," said the Italian; "but, perhaps, when he hears me—"

"He will agree with Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau," said La Saint-Estève; "he said that you had sixty thousand francs in your voice, so you've been robbed of ten thousand."

"Oh! I am not at all worried about his agreeing to give the fifty thousand francs when you have sung before him," said Vautrin; "but to make him pay them promptly is another matter. They say he is embarrassed. But we will have a contract drawn by some shrewd solicitor whom Madame de Saint-Estève will find for us; then the signora will not have to think about money affairs, her friends will attend to those and she can give her whole mind to her rôles."

As Vautrin said: "but to make him pay the fifty thousand francs promptly is another matter," he had found a way to touch his aunt's foot unnoticed. She instantly grasped his meaning.

"For my part, I believe that he will pay her promptly," said she; "he won't want to fall out with us, my dear count; it isn't every day he finds a man who's willing to risk three hundred thousand francs to secure an engagement."

"What, monsieur," Luigia exclaimed, "such a sacrifice to make my engagement possible! I could not think of allowing—"

"My dear Madame de Saint-Estève," said Vautrin, "you talk too much; I take no risk, I have looked into the affair, and at the end of the season I am sure of a profit; besides that, I am very rich, I am a widower, with no children, and, even if I should lose part of the money, I wouldn't hang myself for that."

"That makes no difference, monsieur," said the Italian, "I cannot consent to such madness."

"Then you do not wish me for a friend, you are afraid of being compromised if I come to your assistance?"

"In Italy, monsieur le comte, *cicisbeos* are a regular institution, and so long as there is nothing really wrong in the relation, not much heed is given to appearances; but I cannot accustom myself to the idea of your risking so large an amount of money for me."

"If I were risking it, very good; but the risk is so small, that your engagement and the three hundred thousand francs are not necessarily connected in my mind, and I shall still advance the money to the manager, even if you refuse."

"Come, my dear love," said La Saint-Estève, "you must make up your mind to accept this obligation to my friend Halphertius; you understand that, if I thought you would be carried beyond what you think right and proper, I wouldn't lift my finger in the matter. Go and talk it over with your confessor, and see what he says."

"I would speak to him in Italy; but in France, I would not consult him about a theatrical engagement."

"Come, signora," said Vautrin, in a most benevolent tone, "think of your artistic career; how fair an opening is before you! And when all the newspapers in Europe are talking of the divine Luigia, some people will be well served for having failed to appreciate so great an artist and to maintain friendly relations with her!"

Vautrin was too keen a student of human nature not to have calculated the probable effect of this allusion to the secret wound in the Italian's heart. The poor girl's eyes sparkled, her breath came faster.

"Monsieur le comte," she said, in a solemn tone, "can I have confidence in you?"

"The more surely, signora, because, if I am expending so much money, I am not above seeking certain little favors for myself."

"Which will be?" inquired the Italian.

"That you will be a little kind to me," replied Vautrin, "that the world shall deem me to be even more fortunate than I am, and that you will do nothing to deprive me of that gratification of my self-esteem, with which I will be content."

"I do not understand very clearly," said Luigia, with a contraction of the eyebrows.

"And yet nothing could be simpler," interposed La Saint-Estève; "my friend doesn't wish to be ridiculous, and if, while he had all the appearance of being your protector, you should make up with your deputy or take it into your head to fall in love, he wouldn't cut a very pretty figure, as you can see yourself."

"I shall be nothing more to monsieur," said Luigia, "than a grateful and devoted friend, but neither shall I be anything to any other, especially to the man to whom you refer; I did not break with him, dear madame, without thinking carefully about it."

"The fact is, you see, my pet," rejoined La Saint-Estève, displaying her profound insight into the human heart, "that the man with whom a woman cries out that it's all over is sometimes the most dangerous."

"You speak from the French standpoint, madame," said the Italian.

"You will allow me, then, to come to-morrow and escort you to the rendezvous with this manager? Doubtless you know several of the rôles in his list?"

"I know all Malibran's rôles and Pasta's," replied Luigia, who had been studying for two years with intense earnestness.

"And the night will not bring you evil counsel?" queried Vautrin, slyly.

"There is my hand," said the Italian, with artless frankness; "I do not know if bargains are sanctioned so in France."

"Ah! *diva! diva!*" cried Vautrin, with the most grotesque imitation of the accent of a dilettante.

And he touched his lips to the lovely hand that was held out to him.

When we remember the man's ghastly past, we must agree that comedy—we mistake, we intended to say human life—takes some very strange turns.

The success of the trial surpassed Vautrin's hopes, and all those who were present were unanimously in favor of Luigia's immediate engagement. Indeed, if Sir Francis Drake had had his way, the contract would have been signed on the spot, and the artist would have set out that very day for London, where *Her Majesty's Theatre* was compelled to keep its doors closed because of La Serboni's indisposition. But, having made sure of one part of the affair, Vautrin wished to obtain a little more light upon the matter of his contribution, so that he, attended by his secretary, started for London with the *impresario*, in Signora Luigia's stead, with the object of looking into the manager's financial position more closely.

He made a mental reservation of the right to withdraw his promise without ceremony, in case the condition of affairs should not impress him favorably, inasmuch as the payment of the sum he had at one time determined to contribute was no longer a condition of the *diva's* début.

As he was on the point of starting, he said to La Saint-Estève:

"This is May 17th; on the 21st, at seven in the evening, I shall be in Paris once more with Sir Francis Drake. In the meantime, see to it that our protégée has a suitable trousseau. No nonsensical magnificence, as if it were a matter of fitting out a lorette, but handsome things, in good taste and not showy—things that won't offend the signora's sense of refinement; in a word, such things as you would get for your daughter, if you had one, and she was to be married. You will be sure and order dinner for fifteen at Chevet's, for the same 21st. The guests, who will be enlisted by your client Bixiou, will be, in the first place, all the big men of the press; then yourself, that goes without saying, as mistress of the house, but dress quietly, I beg you, wear nothing startling. We must also have an intelligent solicitor to look after the form of the documents before they are signed, and a pianist to accompany the *diva*, whom we will have sing something after dinner; you must accustom her beforehand to the idea of giving all those dispensers of renown a taste of her powers. Sir Francis Drake and myself will make up the fifteen. I need not tell you that your friend, Count Halphertius, having no house in Paris, gives this dinner at your house, and everything must be of the best and daintiest, so that it will make much talk."

Having given these instructions, Vautrin entered his post-chaise; he knew La Saint-Estève well enough to be sure that his orders would be executed intelligently and punctually.

When Vautrin, in designating Bixiou to his aunt as the person who would enlist the guests for her dinner, referred to him as her *client*, this is what he meant by the title with which he distinguished him. Among the hidden springs serving as feeders to the constantly increasing fortune which Rastignac had scented beneath the Saint-Estève social régime, it will be readily understood that money-lending was not disdained. While political economists have gone so far as to maintain that money is an article of merchandise, the price of which is improperly fixed by law, the provisions of the Penal Code offer no obstacle to consciences as elastic as Vautrin's, except in so far as they cannot be evaded; but where are the fools who would allow themselves to be caught in the claws of those provisions? The man can never have read Molière's *L'Avare* who does not agree with *Maître Simon* that usurers have always, from time immemorial, taken pains to interpose between their occupation and the vexatious intermeddling of the law. Through the kind offices of a go-between, Monsieur Bixiou, whose extremely free and easy existence forced him to have recourse frequently to credit, had found himself involved in business relations with Jacqueline Collin, and by his monkey-like skill in ferreting out mysteries, especially those which might be of interest to her amid the obscurity in which she enveloped herself, he had finally worked his way up to his creditor. One day, finding himself unable to pay a note which was to be presented on the following day, he had resolutely ventured into the ogress's den, hoping to effect the miracle of a renewal in his own interest. La Saint-Estève was fond of men of wit, and, like all ferocious beasts, she had her hours of gentleness. It is needless to say that Bixiou exerted himself to the utmost to tame her; his gayety in misfortune, his dazzling paradox, his wittily immoral theories so utterly bewildered the old usurer, that, not content with granting the renewal he asked, she ended by making him an additional loan, and—*mirabile dictu*—he actually repaid it! Hence a succession of friendly transactions between the artist and the matrimonial agent. Having no conception of the real character of the terrible creature with whom he was rubbing elbows, Bixiou esteemed himself very clever, because he made her laugh, and because, from time to time, in his days of desperation, he succeeded in moving her to the extent of a few napoléons; but he did not know that he was the menagerie dog in the lion's cage, and that that woman, in whose past life there was a suggestion of La Brinvilliers, might go so far as to make him pay with his life for his impertinent familiarities and the interest on his loans. Pending that conclusion, which, by the way, was most improbable, Jacqueline Collin did not fail to employ the jovial chatterer in the trade of ferret which he practised in such superior fashion; and often, too, without his suspecting it, she gave him parts to play in the shady intrigues which formed the principal occupation of her life. In the Luigia affair the caricaturist became a wonderfully convenient tool; they could be sure that, through him, all necessary publicity would be given to the appearance of Count Halphertius on the Parisian horizon, and to his passion for the singer, as well as to the great sacrifices he was making for her. It should be said, moreover, that, by reason of his universal acquaintance with writing, singing, drawing, eating, high-living, and swarming Paris, no one was so well fitted as he to muster the contingent of the trumpets of fame, whose presence Vautrin desired.

On the 21st, promptly at seven o'clock in the evening, all the guests heretofore named by Desroches to Maxime, plus Desroches himself, were assembled in the salon on Rue de Provence, when the negro announced Sir Francis Drake and His Excellency Count Halphertius, who did not wish his name mentioned first. The Swedish nobleman's costume was faultlessly correct: black coat and trowsers, white waistcoat and white cravat, against which stood out the ribbon of an imaginary Order of *Nichan*, which hung about his neck. His other decorations were fastened to his button-hole by little chains, but he had not dared to risk the star embroidered on the coat, vulgarly called a *crachat*.

At the first glance he cast upon the assemblage, Vautrin was disgusted to see that Madame de Saint-Estève's habit and instinct had been more powerful than his special and express request, and a species of green and yellow turban, in which she seemed to him to make a most ridiculous appearance, would have called forth his severe displeasure, were it not that the skill with which his other wishes had been carried out obtained forgiveness for the unseemly headgear. Luigia, on the other hand, dressed in black, as her custom was, and having had the good sense to decline the services of a hair-dresser who had tried in vain to meddle with what he called the disordered condition of her hair, Luigia was royally beautiful, and by a sort of melancholy gravity, in which her whole presence was enveloped, impelled a sentiment of respect which greatly surprised the men to whom Bixiou had represented her as a person within their jurisdiction. The only guest specially introduced to Vautrin was Desroches, whom Bixiou made known to him in these jocose but emphatic words:

"Maître Desroches, the most knowing solicitor of modern times!"

As for Sir Francis Drake, a fact that might lead us to suppose that he was really a little less contemptuous than he wished to appear of the influence of theatrical newspapers, when employed in stimulating capitalists, was that he proved to be acquainted with Félicien Vernou and Lousteau, both of whom were connected with that secondary class of journals, and with whom he shook hands warmly.

Before dinner was announced, Count Halphertius felt called upon to make a little *speech*, and after talking for a moment in an undertone with Signora Luigia, whom he had had the good taste not to approach until some time after his arrival, he said, apparently addressing his aunt, but raising his voice sufficiently to be heard by the whole party:

"Dear Madame, you are really a marvellous creature to introduce me, on my first appearance in a Parisian salon, to examples of all that is most distinguished in literature, art, and business. I, who am a mere savage of the North,—although our country also has its celebrities, Linnæus, Berzelius, the great Thorwaldsen, Tegnen, Franzen, Geier, and the fascinating novelist, Frederika Bremer,—I am abashed and confused, and, in truth, I know not how to express my immeasurable gratitude."

"Why, France and Sweden join hands through Bernadotte," replied La Saint-Estève, whose historical erudition extended as far as that.

"It is true," rejoined Vautrin, "that our beloved sovereign, Charles XIV.—"

His remark was cut short by a butler, who opened the doors of the salon and announced dinner.

La Saint-Estève took Vautrin's arm, and said to him as they led the way:

"Are things fixed to suit you?"

"Yes," said Vautrin, "everything seems to be all right, all but that devilish parrot-colored turban of yours, which frightened me at first."

"Oh, no," said Jacqueline; "with my Javanese face"—she was, in fact, born in Java—"a little something oriental suits me very well."

La Saint-Estève seated Sir Francis Drake and Desroches at her right; Vautrin, sitting at the centre of the table on the opposite side, was flanked by Emile Blondet, of the *Débats*, and by La Luigia, who had Théodore Gaillard on her other side; the twenty-five thousand subscribers to the journal managed by that shrewd business man entitled him to that distinction. The other guests took such seats as they chose. The dinner was not, as a whole, particularly lively; the HUMAN COMEDY has more than once had occasion to exhibit in the brilliant light of the triclinium the jovial boon-companions who were there assembled; but on those occasions they were not all muzzled as they now were. On behalf of La Saint-Estève, Bixiou had requested all the guests to venture upon nothing which could offend the chaste ears of the devout Italian. Being compelled to keep close watch upon themselves, all those men of greater or less wit and brilliancy, as a famous critic says, had lost their spirit, and, retiring in good order upon the food and drink, which was of the best, they talked together in undertones, or allowed the conversation to drift into bourgeois commonplaces. Thus they ate and drank with deaf ears, so to speak; but they did not really dine. Unable to endure such a condition of affairs, Bixiou determined to provide himself at least with a little recreation amid the general torpor. La Saint-Estève's intimacy with a great foreign nobleman had not failed to set his mind at work; he had also been impressed by a certain awkwardness on the part of Vautrin as host, and had said to himself that a true gentleman would have some way of infusing such a party with some life, at less expense. Desiring to test his man, therefore, it occurred to him, about the beginning of the second course, to put him to the question concerning Sweden.

"You are too young, monsieur le comte," he cried from the lower end of the table, "to have known Gustav III., whom Scribe and Auber have celebrated in opera, and who has given his glorious name to one of our galops?"

"I beg your pardon," replied Vautrin, seizing the opportunity thus afforded him; "I am nearly sixty years old, which would make me thirteen in 1792, when our beloved sovereign was slain by the hand of the assassin Ankastroem; so that I can remember those days well."

Thereupon the chief of the secret police proceeded to avoid the ambuscade, with the assistance of a volume entitled *Characters and Anecdotes of the Court of Sweden*, published anonymously in 1808, by Arthus Bertrand, which he had purchased at an old book-stall since his Swedish *incarnation*. He did even better: like a man who simply waits to be started upon a text with which he is familiar, to exhibit himself at his best as soon as the spigot is open, he showed such an abundance of pertinent information concerning the great names of his country, gave so many circumstantial details, told so many interesting secret anecdotes, notably in relation to the famous *coup d'Etat* by which Gustav III. emancipated his throne in 1772; he was so accurate and so interesting that, as they left the table, Emile Blondet said to Bixiou:

"I felt as you did; a foreign count produced by this marriage-contractor seemed suspicious to me at first; but, not only was the dinner a princely affair, but the man knows his court of Sweden as it is impossible to learn it from books. He is certainly a man of very good family, and, if one had any leisure time, a most interesting pamphlet could be made of all he has told us."

Shortly after they had taken their coffee, Sir Francis Drake, Vautrin, and Desroches went into a room adjoining the salon, where the partnership articles and the engagement of the prima donna were discussed. All the clauses being agreed upon, Vautrin summoned the *diva* to affix her signature.

"He's a sly fox," said Desroches to Bixiou as he came from the conference. "He must be enormously rich, he counted out to the Englishman on the spot three hundred thousand francs in banknotes; and when I suggested inserting in the engagement a rather *stiff* article relative to the payment of the salary,—for Sir Francis Drake has the reputation of not paying *just on the dot*, as Léon de Lora says,—our gentleman objected to a written manifestation of distrust, whence I conclude that he has obtained nothing from the fair Italian as yet, and that he won't be sorry to have her in his power, as a result of her pay being in arrears."

"Did he say anything about your fees?" said Bixiou. "I told La Saint-Estève that men of business of your stamp didn't put themselves out for the soup and boiled beef, but that there must be parsley round the dish."

"Look!" said Desroches, taking from his pocket an oblong gold box very richly chased. "As I was reading the documents just now, our man, noticing that I had placed my snuff-box of Irish horn, worth about ten francs, on the table at my side, interrupted me to ask me to pass it to him. When I had read the papers through, I turned to *take a pinch*, and found this bauble in place of my box, which had disappeared."

"*My aunt*," said Bixiou, "would lend three or four hundred francs on it, which means that it's worth a note for a thousand."

"When I cried out against the substitution," continued Desroches, "our man courteously replied: 'I am the gainer by the change; I now possess a valuable relic, the snuff-box of the Napoléon of solicitors.'"

"That was very neatly turned," said Bixiou, "and by the grace of God and La Saint-Estève I will cultivate this acquaintance. What do you say? Suppose I do his picture for one of the early numbers of *Charivari?*"

"You must find out first if he is sufficiently French to enjoy seeing himself in caricature," said Desroches.

At that moment, the notes of a piano announced that Signora Luigia was about to appear in the breach. She sang the romanza *du Saule* with a depth of expression that moved the whole assemblage profoundly, although the trial took place before an areopagus of critics engaged in digesting a dinner of which no one of them had partaken sparingly. Emile Blondet, who was looked upon as a political thinker rather than a man of imagination, was surprised to find himself beating time in his enthusiasm; to be sure, he beat it falsely, but his emotion was none the less evident. When the performance was at an end, Félicien Vernou and Lousteau went up to Sir Francis Drake and said to him, with a great show of indignation, assumed for the purpose of flattering his adroitness and encouraging his managerial hopes:

"You must be a great villain to engage such an artiste for fifty thousand francs, a mere crust of bread!"

La Luigia sang again—an air from Paisiello's *Nina*—and, in portraying that sharply accentuated part, she displayed a talent as an actress in nowise inferior to her talent as a singer.

"She frightened me!" said La Saint-Estève to Vautrin, in an undertone; "I thought I was looking at Peyrade's daughter."

An allusion to a ghastly story connected with that of the banker Nucingen, in which this terrible creature had played the principal rôle; in which she had driven a wretched girl mad by causing her to be taken to a house of prostitution in pursuance of an atrocious scheme of revenge.—See *Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*.—Luigia's triumph was made complete, and her judges were powerfully influenced in her favor by her modesty and a sort of unconsciousness of her wonderful talent, which she continued to display amid the praise that was showered upon her from all sides. Accustomed as they were to the unreasoning conceit and impudent pretensions of the petty upstarts of the stage, all those journalists were overpowered by the humility and simplicity of this empress, who seemed artlessly astounded by the effect she had produced. By a few words adroitly addressed to each of these great men before the party broke up, and by a card which he was careful to leave at their residences the next day, Count Halphertius assured his protégée, temporarily at least, a chorus of admiration which would be heard across the channel, and would be almost equivalent to a brilliant début at the Théâtre-Italien in Paris. The Signora's departure was fixed for the following day. It was decided that she should go with Sir Francis Drake. To avoid a tête-à-tête, Madame de Saint-Estève took the precaution to engage a lady's maid, and, contrary to her usual custom *when she meddled with servants*, she was careful to select a respectable girl. Count Halphertius furnished a proof of his disinterestedness, which was keenly appreciated: he announced, and it was quite true, that important business detained him at Paris, reserving the right, if he should be fortunate enough to adjust his business within a month or six weeks, to make a flying trip to London, in order to enjoy the triumph of which he no longer entertained any doubt, and of which he congratulated himself upon being the originator and the instrument.

*

A few days before Luigia's departure, the Boulogne packet conveyed another personage of this story to England.

Jacques Bricheteau, as soon as he had ascertained the place at which he could forward to Sallenauve certain information, which he considered of the utmost importance, had abandoned the idea of writing to him; it had seemed to him a much surer and simpler way to go and confer with him. When he reached London, the traveller was surprised to learn that Hanwell was one of the most celebrated lunatic asylums in the three kingdoms. However, when he remembered the apprehensions that Marie-Gaston's mental condition had caused his friend, he could readily have divined the truth; but he was completely at sea when he was told, in addition, that that establishment, at which patients were treated at the expense of the county, received only those of the poorer classes, and that no one was admitted for money. But Jacques Bricheteau, who has already given us more than one proof of his energetic and resolute character, did not waste his time in useless conjectures; he determined to go on to Hanwell without delay, and, as that place is only nine miles from London, he soon arrived there. Hanwell is a large building of attractive appearance; its façade, which is no less than nine hundred and ninety-six feet long, is broken by three octagonal towers with three floors, at the centre and two ends; thus the monotony of the architectural lines is relieved, the melancholy purpose for which the building is designed seeming to demand great sobriety of decoration.

The asylum is pleasantly situated at the foot of a hill on the boundary line of the counties of Surrey and Middlesex. Its extensive appurtenances—gardens and farms—lie between the Uxbridge road, the Brent River, and a canal called the Grand Junction canal. Nine hundred and fifteen patients can be accommodated and treated there. As it is a recognized fact that work is one of the most valuable auxiliaries in the treatment of the insane, the asylum contains workshops for cabinet-makers, locksmiths, painters, glaziers, brushmakers, charcoal-burners; thread, also, is made there, and shoes, baskets, straw hats, and everything that women work upon. The most delicate articles manufactured are sold to visitors in a bazaar where they are exposed, and yield a handsome revenue. Those persons who are incapable of working at a trade are employed in gardening and on the farms which supply the needs of the institution to a great extent; bread and beer also are made on the premises; also all the necessary linen, this last being bleached by a machine worked by steam, which heats all parts of the building at the same time. A chapel supplied with a fine organ, a library, and a hall used for concerts, the salutary influence of music upon the health of the inmates being well established, bear witness that, side by side with intelligent attention to physical suffering, the needs of the moral nature are neither forgotten nor neglected.

Lastly, as Lord Lewin wrote to Sallenauve, at the head of the establishment is Doctor Ellis, a distinguished practitioner, to whom we are indebted for a remarkable book on the causes and cure of mental diseases. In the treatment of those diseases this skilful alienist did not disdain the learning and the aid of phrenological science. Having been admitted to his presence, the organist asked him if a Frenchman named Sallenauve was residing temporarily at Hanwell. There again Jacques Bricheteau paid the penalty of his unshorn and impoverished aspect, and the doctor, not deigning to enter into any explanation with him, replied sharply and explicitly that Monsieur de Sallenauve's name was entirely unknown to him. After all, that reply was altogether reasonable. So Jacques Bricheteau withdrew, greatly disappointed; and reaching the conclusion that Madame de l'Estorade had mispronounced or that he himself had misunderstood the name Hanwell, he passed several days scouring the county of Middlesex, visiting every place to which the termination *ell* attracted his attention.

As all his investigations were fruitless, Jacques Bricheteau, whose persevering and resourceful mind was seldom defeated in any of his undertakings, determined to make another written assault upon Hanwell, thinking with reason that a letter might find its way where a man would be intercepted; and so it proved, for, during the evening of the day on which he entrusted his letter to the post, he received a reply from Sallenauve urging him to come to the asylum and promising him a most cordial reception. Doctor Ellis's conduct was sufficiently explained to Bricheteau, when he knew of the disaster that had befallen Marie-Gaston. Discretion is, beyond question, one of the most essential virtues of the manager of an asylum for the insane, whose position makes him the daily depository of secrets involving the honor of whole families. To admit that the most intimate friend of Marie-Gaston, whose extreme melancholy was known to all Parisian society, was then at Hanwell, might result in putting an unknown spy upon the traces of his patient, whereby the secrecy which it was desirable to maintain concerning a mental malady, which he chose to look upon as temporary and curable, would have been endangered.

Once more at the asylum and introduced by Sallenauve as one of his friends, Jacques Bricheteau received the heartiest welcome. After apologizing to him, Doctor Ellis, who had obtained truly marvellous results more than once in his practice, from the influence of music, informed him that he looked upon his visit as a most fortunate chance, and that his remarkable skill as an organist might prove to be the last step in the patient's case. Unfortunately, Marie-Gaston's condition had developed some serious complications since his departure from Ville-d'Avray. Until his arrival in England, he had been comparatively cheerful, complying docilely with all Lord Lewin's advice, so that one would have taken them for two friends travelling together for pleasure. But when, instead of yielding to the sick man's impatient wish to sail without delay for South America, Lord Lewin, on the pretext that certain important business required his presence at a place near London, asked Marie-Gaston to go with him, he began to suspect that his mania had been cajoled by some trick. However, he finally allowed himself to be taken to Hanwell, which Lord Lewin had represented to him as a royal castle, nor did he make any resistance even when he was asked to cross the threshold of his future prison; but when he was once in the presence of Doctor Ellis, who had been previously notified by Lord Lewin of their coming, a sort of instinct, which insane persons often display, seemed to reveal to Sallenauve's unfortunate friend the danger that threatened his liberty.

"Monsieur's face is unpleasant to me," he said aloud to Lord Lewin; "let us go!"

The doctor tried to turn this outburst aside as a jest; but Marie-Gaston, becoming more and more excited, cried:

"Be quiet! your mirth is hateful to me, you look like an executioner."

It may be that the profound attention with which alienists try to read what is written in the features of their patients, combined with the fixed stern glance with which they are often compelled to awe them into submission, eventually imparts to their faces a searching, inquisitorial expression calculated to produce a most irritating effect on the nervous system, impressionable at the best, of the unfortunate wretches subjected to their scrutiny.

"But I venture to hope that you will not deprive me of the pleasure of keeping you to dinner with my friend Lord Lewin?"

"What! dine with you," replied Marie-Gaston, vehemently, "so that you may poison me!"

"Well, isn't poison what you want?" said Lord Lewin, quickly. "Weren't you speaking the other day of taking a dose of hydrocyanic acid?"

In asking that provoking question, Lord Lewin was not, as one might be tempted to think, guilty of an imprudence: having studied madmen with much care, he had noticed that a most threatening feeling of wrath against Doctor Ellis was smouldering in Marie-Gaston's mind, and, as he was swift in thought and energetic in action, he managed to deflect toward himself the storm-cloud that was all ready to burst. Affairs turned out as he had anticipated.

"Ah! you vile dog!" cried Marie-Gaston, leaping at his throat, "you have an understanding with that other fellow, and you sell him my secrets!"

Lord Lewin had some difficulty in extricating himself from his powerful grasp, and the interference of two keepers was necessary; the unfortunate man had become furiously insane. That paroxysm, which lasted several days, yielded at last to the care and treatment of the doctor, and now the patient had become mild and calm, and showed some symptoms of a probable cure; but there was still one last crisis to be passed, and Sir William Ellis was looking about in search of the best method of provoking it, when Jacques Bricheteau appeared. As soon as Sallenauve was alone with the organist, he inquired with interest what motive had led him to come in search of him, and received with some excitement the news of the scheme which Maxime and the Beauvisages seemed to be concocting against him. His former suspicions at once recurred to his mind.

"Are you very sure," he asked Bricheteau, "that that individual of whom I hardly caught a glimpse was really the Marquis de Sallenauve?"

"Mother Marie des Anges and Achille Pigoult, by whom I was informed of this plot," replied Bricheteau, "have no more doubt than I of the marquis's identity; and there is only a single fact in connection with this idle gossip with which they are trying to frighten you, that seems to me at all serious; that is that, by your absence, you are leaving your adversaries a clear field."

"But the Chamber will not pass judgment without hearing me," rejoined the deputy; "I have written to the president to ask for leave of absence, and I have requested L'Estorade, who knows the explanation of my presence here, to be my guarantor in the very improbable case that my request for leave should be denied."

"Did you write to madame, too?" inquired the organist.

"I wrote only to her," replied Sallenauve, "to tell her of the disaster that had overtaken our poor friend, and at the same time I asked her to inform her husband of the favor I wished him to do me."

"If that is the way of it," said Bricheteau, "do not rely upon the l'Estorades in any respect; rumors of the plot that is brewing against you must have reached them at that time."

Thereupon he described the reception he had met with, as well as Madame de l'Estorade's unkind remarks, whence he concluded that no assistance could be looked for from that quarter in the struggle that was about to begin.

"I have some right to be surprised by this turn of affairs," rejoined Sallenauve, "after the earnest assurance given me by Madame de l'Estorade of a friendship that would endure any test; but anything is possible," he added, philosophically, "and calumny has very often undermined devoted attachments."

"Now you will understand," said the organist, "that we must start at once for Paris, without a moment's delay; everything considered, your presence here is not really necessary."

"On the contrary," replied Sallenauve, "the doctor was congratulating himself only this morning because I had determined to come here, saying that my presence might become very useful at any moment. Thus far he hasn't allowed me to see the patient, but has kept me in reserve for some decisive stroke."

"Nevertheless, the utility of your presence is problematical, whereas, by staying on here, you unquestionably endanger your political future, your standing,—in a word, all that the most devoted friendship is not entitled to call upon you to sacrifice."

"Let us talk it over with the doctor," said Sallenauve, at last forced to recognize the justice of Bricheteau's persistence.

When asked whether Sallenauve's residence at the asylum ought to be prolonged for some time, the doctor replied:

"I think so. I have just seen our patient, and the cerebral irritation, which must necessarily have yielded to the action of material remedies before we can think of resorting to any moral remedies, seems to me unfortunately to show signs of increased intensity."

"But you have not lost all hope of curing him, doctor?" said Sallenauve, eagerly.

"Far from it; I have absolute faith in a happy termination; but these painful mental affections exhibit frequent alternations of good and bad symptoms, and, in fact, I am beginning to think that the cure will be postponed much longer than I supposed at first."

"Having recently been elected a member of the Chamber of Deputies," said Sallenauve, "I am summoned to Paris by the opening of the session; at the same time my presence is demanded by matters of serious importance, concerning which, monsieur," he added, indicating Bricheteau, "came here expressly to talk with me; if, therefore, I may believe that my presence here is not likely to be immediately serviceable—"

"Go," said the doctor; "this may be a very slow business. If the patient's condition had not grown worse, I hoped, with monsieur's assistance on the organ, with you, and with the help of a young kinswoman of Madame Ellis, who has more than once, on similar occasions, seconded my efforts with much intelligence, I hoped, I say, to arrange some dramatic scene, from which I anticipated a good result. But our young kinswoman is absent, nor is it possible for the moment to attack the trouble except by physical remedies; so I say, go! The patient is one of those in whom it is impossible not to take a lively interest; you can leave him in my hands and Lord Lewin's with perfect security; I will even go so far as to say that I look upon his cure as a matter in which my self-esteem is involved: I know of no surer guaranty for your anxiety in the mouth of a physician."

Sallenauve gratefully pressed the doctor's hand, seeing how earnestly he labored to set his mind at rest. He went to take leave of Madame Ellis, who was no less earnest than her husband in promising to watch over Marie-Gaston's welfare with all a mother's care. As for Lord Lewin, he had conceived the most friendly esteem for Sallenauve, and his past conduct was a sufficient guaranty of what might be expected of him in the present and the future. Bricheteau had no difficulty therefore in persuading Sallenauve to start without further delay.

Reaching London about five in the afternoon, the travellers would have continued their journey that same evening but for the surprise that awaited them there. In the first place, their attention was attracted by enormous posters, of the sort that English *puffisme* alone can conceive, announcing at every street corner the second appearance of SIGNORA LUIGIA at *Her Majesty's Theatre*, for that very evening. The name alone was sufficient to attract the notice of the travellers, but the newspapers to which they resorted for more ample information supplied them, according to the English fashion, with so many circumstantial details concerning the *débutante*, that Sallenauve could no longer doubt the transformation of his former housekeeper into one of the most dazzling stars that had risen above the Britannic horizon for a long while. If he had listened to Jacques Bricheteau, he would have contented himself with saluting the fair Italian's triumph from afar, and would have continued his journey. But, having reflected that an evening passed in London would not materially delay him, the deputy determined to estimate with his own eyes and ears the value of the chorus of enthusiasm which arose on all sides on the subject of the prima donna.

Repairing at once to the box-office of the theatre, which he found closed, Sallenauve had no difficulty in detecting all the symptoms of a tremendous success: since two o'clock in the afternoon every seat in the hall had been sold, and he was only too glad to purchase two orchestra stalls from a speculator, for five pounds—about one hundred and twenty-five francs. Never, perhaps, had Her Majesty's theatre seen a finer audience, and one cannot avoid being impressed by the strange agencies at work in human affairs when one reflects that the starting-point of all this frantic excitement of the English aristocracy over the newly-risen great artiste was in reality the desire of Vautrin, the ex-galley-slave, to mount one step higher in the police hierarchy. By another coincidence, equally strange, the opera announced in the posters was Paisiello's *La Pazza d'Amore*, from which Luigia had sung an aria on the occasion of Madame de Saint-Estève's dinner-party. When the curtain rose, Sallenauve, who had been living nearly a week among a whole population of lunatics, was the better able to appreciate the prodigious histrionic talent displayed by his former housekeeper in the rôle of Nina; and in presence of an excruciatingly truthful counterfeit of insanity he experienced anew all the emotion which the ghastly reality of Marie-Gaston's madness had caused him to feel. Bricheteau, despite the ill-humor due to what he called Sallenauve's loitering, also ended by falling under the spell of the singer's powerful acting, and, at the critical moment, when the whole audience was beside itself with enthusiasm, and the stage was inundated with bouquets, he said to the deputy:

"Faith, I can only wish you on another stage a triumph approaching this."

Then, yielding to an imprudent impulse, he added:

"But there are no such triumphs in politics; art alone is great—"

"And Luigia is its prophet!" added Sallenauve, trying to smile amid the tears that admiration forced from his eyes.

At the close of the performance, Bricheteau looked at his watch; it was a quarter to eleven, and by using the utmost diligence it was possible for the travellers to take the *steamer* that started at eleven; but as the organist turned to make that suggestion to Sallenauve, who was behind him in the crowd, he could not find his man: the deputy had vanished.

A quarter of an hour later La Luigia's maid entered the dressing-room where her mistress was receiving the homage of the greatest names in England, who were presented to her by Sir Francis Drake. The girl handed the signora a card. As she read the name, the Italian changed color and whispered a few words in the maid's ear. Thereafter she displayed such haste to be rid of the great throng attracted by her triumph, that several of her adorers in embryo could not avoid showing their amazement. But an artiste in vogue has unusual privileges, and the fatiguing nature of the rôle into which she had put so much soul seemed so valid an excuse for her ill-humor, that her court dispersed without overmuch murmuring; indeed, her conduct, which was taken for caprice, became a very piquant source of attraction to several budding fancies that were on the point of blossoming. The signora, when she was alone, quickly resumed her ordinary dress; in a very few minutes the manager's carriage set her down at the hotel where she had taken rooms on her arrival in London; and a moment later she entered her salon and found Sallenauve there waiting for her.

"You here, monsieur," she said; "it is like a dream."

"Especially for me," rejoined Sallenauve, "who find you in London, when I have caused such careful search to be made for you in Paris, to no purpose."

"You have taken that trouble, and with what object?"

"You left us in such an extraordinary way, your impulses are so hasty, you knew so little of Paris, and so many perils lurk beneath the footsteps of your inexperience, that it seemed to me that any catastrophe might be feared."

"What harm would have happened to me? I was not your wife, nor your sister, nor your mistress; I was only your—"

"I had thought," interrupted Sallenauve, hastily, "that you were my friend."

"I was your—debtor," said La Luigia; "I had noticed that I was becoming a burden to you in your new position. Was there anything else for me to do under those circumstances than to rid you of me?"

"What had happened to give you that hateful certainty? Had I said anything or done anything to imply it? Was it impossible to speak to you about providing for your future without wounding your susceptibilities to that extent?"

"One feels as one feels," replied the Italian; "I had a feeling that you wished me to be somewhere else than in your house. You had shown me that I need have no anxiety about my future; and you see now that the outlook is not very alarming."

"On the contrary, it seems to me so brilliant that, if I were not afraid of seeming presumptuous, I would venture to ask you from what more fortunate hand than mine you have received such prompt and effective assistance?"

"A great Swedish nobleman," Luigia replied without hesitation, "who spends a part of his enormous fortune in encouraging the arts, procured an engagement for me at the Queen's theatre; the kindly indulgence of the public has done the rest."

"You mean your talent; I was present at the performance this evening."

"Were you pleased ever so little with your humble servant?" queried Luigia, with a coquettish reverence.

"Your superior musical ability did not surprise me; I was already aware of it, and it had been warranted by an infallible judge; but your outbursts of dramatic passion, your powerful and self-assured acting, I was lost in admiration of those."

"You see I have suffered much," replied the Italian; "unhappiness is a great teacher."

"Suffered!" echoed Sallenauve; "in Italy of course? For I like to assure myself that, since your arrival in France—"

"I have suffered still!" said Luigia, in a trembling voice; "I was not born under a lucky star."

"That *still* sounds to me like a reproach; it is very late to tell me of the wrongs I have inflicted on you."

"You have done me no wrong in any way whatever; the trouble was here!" said the Italian, striking her breast; "it came from myself alone."

"Probably some foolish fancy, like that you had when you imagined that you were bound in honor to leave my house."

"Oh! if I were not dreaming," exclaimed the Italian, "and if I could know what is really in your mind! If only because of what you have done for me, I must needs desire your esteem, and I was forbidden forever to aspire to it."

"Why, my dear Luigia, these are what I call ideas for which there is no name. Have I ever failed in regard and consideration for you? And was not your conduct always exemplary?"

"Yes, I tried to do nothing which could make you think hardly of me; but was I any the less Benedetto's widow for that?"

"What! you imagine that that misfortune, the sequel of a too just vengeance—"

"Ah! that man's death could not lower me in your eyes, I know—far from it; but I had been the wife of the clown, the police spy, the unworthy wretch, always ready to sell me to anyone who would agree to buy me."

"While that condition of affairs lasted, I considered that you were to be pitied, but not despised, no, no!"

"But for nearly two years," said the Italian, earnestly, "we lived alone, under the same roof."

"To be sure, and I had become accustomed to it and found it extremely pleasant."

"Did you consider me ugly?"

"You know very well that I did not, as I modelled my most beautiful statue after you."

"Foolish?"

"No one can be foolish who displays so much intelligence in her rôles."

"Then you see that you must have despised me!"

Sallenauve seemed amazed at the earnestness with which this deduction was drawn, and he considered that he was very clever in replying:

"It seems to me that by acting in any other way I should have been much nearer to treating you with contempt."

But he had to do with a woman who, in everything, in her friendships, in her hatreds, in her acts and in her speech, always went straight to her goal.

"To-day, monsieur," she rejoined, as if she were afraid of being misunderstood, "I can tell you everything, for I am speaking of the past, and the future no longer belongs to me. From the day when you were kind to me, and when, by your generous protection, I escaped an infamous outrage, my whole heart was yours."

Sallenauve, who had never suspected the existence of that sentiment, and who was entirely unable to understand how it could have been avowed with such artless simplicity, was at a loss for a reply.

"I was not unaware," continued this extraordinary woman, "that I had much to do to raise myself from the degradation in which you saw me at our first meeting. If, from the moment that you consented to take me with you, I had seen any indications of love-making on your part, if you had revealed any purpose to take advantage of the dangerous position in which I had voluntarily placed myself, my heart would have shrunk back at once, you would have seemed to me simply an ordinary man, and, to rise from the level to which Benedetto dragged me down, it was not enough—"

"So that to love you would have been to insult you," observed Sallenauve; "not to love you was to be cruel! What sort of woman are you, then, and how can one avoid wounding you?"

"You should not have loved me," replied the artiste, "when you did not really know me, and when I had hardly risen out of my mire, because then your love would have been a love of the eyes and the head, which it is never prudent to trust. But when, after I had passed two years at your side, you were able to judge from my conduct whether I was an estimable woman; when, without ever accepting any pleasure, devoting myself unreservedly to the care of your house, with no other relaxation than study, which I depended upon to raise myself to the condition of an artist like you, I went so far, purely for the joy of seeing you produce a masterpiece, as to sacrifice to you the womanly modesty which you had seen me defend so vigorously at another time, then you were cruel not to understand me, and your imagination will never tell you what I have suffered, and all the tears you have made me shed!"

"But I was your host, dear Luigia, and even if I had had a suspicion of what you now tell me, my duty as an honorable man would bid me see nothing, understand nothing, except upon the most convincing proof."

"Was not my constant melancholy an indication? If my heart had been free, should I not have been less reserved, more familiar? But the explanation is simple enough: you could not notice anything, for your fancy turned in another direction."

"And if that were so?"

"It should not have been so," replied the Italian, with animation. "That woman was not free: she had a husband and children; and it was of no use for you to make a saint of her, for even if I had had no other advantage over her than that of youth—ridiculous as it is for me to say it—it seems to me that she was inferior to me!"

Sallenauve could not restrain a smile; but he replied, in a serious tone:

"You are altogether mistaken concerning your rival; Madame de l'Estorade was never anything more to me than a model, and a model whose only value consisted in her resemblance to another woman. That woman I knew at Rome, before I knew you; she had beauty and youth, an extraordinary taste for art, and to-day she is confined in a convent, paying tribute like you to misfortune; thus, you see, all your perfections—"

"What! three love-stories, and not one that has reached a conclusion?" said Luigia. "Really, yours is a strange star! I do not doubt that, when you failed so entirely to understand me, I was simply feeling the effects of its singular influence, and in that case I must forgive you."

"As you deign to receive me into favor once more, allow me to revert to my curiosity: you told me just now that your future no longer belonged to you. I can but understand from the very great frankness of your avowal that some impregnable barrier must have arisen between us to give you the courage to make it. What is this power, pray, by which you have been raised so high almost at a single bound? Can it be that you have made a compact with the devil?"

"Perhaps so," said the Italian, with a laugh.

"Do not laugh," rejoined Sallenauve; "you chose to venture alone into that hell called Paris, and I should not be astonished to find that you made some dangerous acquaintance at the very beginning. I know what tremendous difficulty the greatest artists often have in securing an engagement. Do you know who this foreign nobleman is, who has removed all the obstacles so speedily?"

"I know that he risked a fabulous sum to assure my engagement, that my salary is fifty thousand francs, and that he did not even come to London with me."

"And do you mean to say that all this devotion is without conditions?"

"No, indeed. My patron is at an age when passion has ceased to exist, but when a man has an abundance of self-esteem; therefore the fact that he is my patron must be publicly declared, and I have agreed to do nothing, to say nothing, which can cast a shadow upon his unsubstantial good fortune. However, I have not thought that I owed this explanation to anyone but you, and I ask you most earnestly to maintain absolute secrecy about it."

"But is there nothing in your situation that makes it seem unlikely to last? How did you become acquainted with this man, whom you hope to feed always on smoke?"

"Through a charitably-disposed lady, who came to see me during your absence. She had noticed my voice at Saint-Sulpice, during the services of the *month of Marie*, and she tried to bribe me to sing at Notre-Dame de Lorette, her parish."

"And her name?"

"Madame de Saint-Estève."

Although he had never fathomed the depths of Jacqueline Collin, Sallenauve knew of Madame de Saint-Etève as a marriage-broker, and as one who managed all sorts of unsavory intrigues; he had sometimes heard Bixiou speak of her.

"That woman," he said, "has a wretched reputation in Paris; she's an *intrigante* of the worst sort."

"I suspected as much," said Luigia, "but what does it matter to me?"

"But if the man to whom she has introduced you—"

"Should prove to be an *intrigant* like herself? that is improbable; the three hundred thousand francs that he paid into the manager's cash-box have put the theatre on its feet."

"He may be rich and at the same time have evil designs on you; there is nothing to make that impossible."

"He has designs upon me," replied Luigia, with dignity, "but he will not carry them out; between his designs and me there is myself."

"But your reputation?"

"It was lost when I left your house. Everybody said that I was your mistress; you yourself had to explain away the rumor to your electors; you contradicted it, but did you suppose that you had killed it?"

"And what about my esteem of which you used to think so much?"

"I no longer need it; you did not love me when I wanted you to; you shall not love me when I don't want you to."

"Who knows?" said Sallenauve.

"There are two reasons why it cannot be so," replied the Italian: "in the first place, it is too late, and then we are no longer on the same road."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I am an artist, and you have ceased to be one; I am ascending, you are descending."

"You call it descending when I may perhaps rise to positions of the greatest dignity in the state?"

"No matter how high you may rise," said Luigia, passionately, "you will still be below your past and the great future that was in store for you; and, by the way, I believe I have not told you the truth; if you had remained a sculptor, it seems to me that I should have had patience to endure your coldness and disdain for some time longer; I should at least have decided to wait until after I had made a trial of my vocation, in the hope that the halo that surrounds the heads of actresses might perhaps at last force upon your attention the fact that I was there beside you. On the day that you became an apostate I resolved to continue my humiliating sacrifice no longer, for our futures had ceased to have anything in common."

"What!" said Sallenauve, holding out his hand, which the cantatrice did not take, "are we not even to remain friends?"

"You have a friend," the Italian replied. "No, everything is closed and at an end. We shall hear of each other, and as we pass at a distance we shall salute each other with a wave of the hand, but nothing more."

"So this is the end of our friendship!" said Sallenauve, sadly.

Luigia gazed at him for a moment, and a tear glistened in her eye.

"Listen!" she said, with a sincere and determined accent, "this is what is possible. I have loved you, and no one will take your place in the heart you have disdained. They will tell you that I have lovers: this old man whose connection with me I shall tacitly admit, and others perhaps, but you will believe nothing of it if you remember what sort of woman I am. Who knows? it may be that hereafter, when your life has been swept clear of the other sentiments that have blocked my way into it, the freedom and strangeness of the confession you have heard will recur to your memory, and, in that case, it would not be altogether remarkable if, after that long détour, you should end by longing for me. If that should happen, and, as the result of painful disillusionment, you should be brought back, by your remorse, to the religion of art, then, if time meanwhile has not made the idea of love absurd as between us, remember this evening. Now we must part, for it is very late for a tête-à-tête, and the external appearance of loyalty to my old foreign patron is what I am particularly pledged to maintain."

With that, she took a candle and passed into an adjoining room, leaving the deputy in a frame of mind which can be imagined after the surprises of every description that had greeted him during that interview.

On returning to the hotel at which he had alighted when he had arrived from Hanwell, he found Bricheteau awaiting him at the door.

"Where in the devil have you been?" cried the organist, beside himself with impatience; "we are too late now for the night packet!"

"Oh! well," said Sallenauve, carelessly, "I shall have a few hours more to play truant."

"But meanwhile your enemies are pushing forward their mines!"

"What do I care? Must one not be ready for anything in this cavern called political life?"

"It's as I suspected," said Bricheteau, "you have been to see Luigia; her triumph has gone to your head, and the man of statues appears under the deputy!"

"Did not you yourself say just now that art alone is great?"

"But the orator is an artist, too," rejoined Bricheteau, "and the greatest of all artists; for the others speak to the mind and the heart, he alone to the conscience and the will. However, it's of no use now to look back; a duel has begun between you and your adversaries. Are you an honorable man, or a villain who has succeeded in stealing a name? That is the question to be answered, and perhaps to be discussed from the tribune in your absence."

"I am very much afraid that you have led me astray; I had a treasure in my hands, which I trampled under foot."

"Luckily," the organist replied, "that is a mere vapor which the night will dissipate. To-morrow you will remember your agreements with your father and the great future that is assured you."

*

The opening session had taken place, Sallenauve had not appeared, and his absence had not failed to cause a considerable sensation in the democratic party. At the office of the *National*, especially, there was much excitement. It seemed no more than natural that the newly-elected deputy, who was a shareholder in the paper, who had been a frequent visitor at its office before the election and had even consented to furnish several articles for its columns, should come there to learn the news at the opening of the session.

"Can it be that the man intends to play the sneak with us, now that he's elected?" said some of the editors, remarking upon the utter disappearance of the new deputy. "It's quite the custom among their lordships of parliament to pay court to us most obsequiously while they are in the candidate stage, and to throw us aside like their old coats, after they have climbed the tree. But this *gentleman* had better not play any tricks on us, we have more than one way of *squeezing* people."

The editor-in-chief, being less inclined to lose his head, had calmed this first ebullition; but Sallenauve's failure to appear at the opening session had seemed strange to him, none the less.

The next day, when the formation of committees took place and the presidents and secretaries were elected,—an operation of some importance because it foreshadows the majority,—Sallenauve's absence had a positive bearing on the result. In the committee to which he was assigned by lot, the ministerial candidate was elected by a majority of only one, so that the presence of the deputy from Arcis would have assured the election of the opposition candidate. Consequently, marked dissatisfaction was manifest in the party organs, which, while explaining their defeat by that unforeseen accident, did not attempt to conceal their somewhat bitter astonishment. They did not as yet characterize the defaulter's conduct, but they declared that they did not know how to explain it. Maxime, meanwhile, had his eyes open, and he only awaited the definitive installation of the officers of the Chamber to file the petition for permission to prosecute, in the name of the Romilly peasant. The document had been drawn up by Massol, and beneath his skilful pen the facts that he was instructed to set forth acquired that degree of probability which lawyers, even those most scrupulous in the matter of verity, know how to impart to their claims and statements. But when Maxime found that Sallenauve's absence was prolonged and was beginning to cause scandal, he went once more to Rastignac, and, taking to himself the credit for the adroit method of aggression invented by Desroches, he asked the minister if he did not consider that the time had come for him to lay aside the attitude of passive observation which he had thus far deemed it his duty to maintain.

Rastignac on that occasion was much more explicit; Sallenauve's ill-timed absence in foreign parts seemed to him to indicate that a troubled conscience had turned his head. He therefore requested Monsieur de Trailles to present the petition the same day, and made no further difficulty about promising his assistance to assure the success of a scheme which had assumed a definite color, and from which a pretty result in the way of scandal might reasonably be anticipated. No later than the following day the first trace of his underhand intervention appeared. The order of the day in the Chamber was the verification of credentials. The deputy assigned to report upon the elections in the department of the Aube happened to be one of the loyal supporters of the ministry, and he dealt with the question as follows, in compliance with the confidential suggestion that was whispered to him:

"The proceedings of the electoral college of Arcis were quite regular, Monsieur de Sallenauve had forwarded in due time to the Committee on Elections the necessary documents to establish his eligibility, and there seemed to be no possible obstacle to his admission. But reports of an extraordinary nature concerning the identity of the new deputy have gained currency since the election; and, in confirmation of those reports, a petition has been received for permission to institute a prosecution. This petition makes an extremely serious charge; Monsieur de Sallenauve is alleged to have usurped the name he bears, and such usurpation, based upon a duly authenticated document, is alleged to have been committed by means of a substitution of persons. The circumstance most to be regretted," continued the reporter, "is the absence of Monsieur de Sallenauve, who, instead of coming forward to deny the extraordinary accusation made against him, has abstained from attending the sessions of the Chamber since the opening, nor has he been seen. Under these circumstances, can he properly be admitted? The committee was of the opinion that he could not, and that its duty was to recommend a postponement of the question."

Daniel d'Arthez, a deputy of the legitimist opposition, of whom we have heard, at Arcis, as being strongly in favor of Sallenauve's election, at once asked to be heard upon the conclusions of the committee, and begged the Chamber to bear in mind what an extraordinary proceeding their adoption would be.

"The question before the Chamber was the regularity of the election. No irregularity was suggested; therefore there was but one course for the Chamber to pursue: to proceed at once to a vote, and to recognize as valid and decisive an election of which there was nothing to impair the validity. To import into the question the petition for permission to prosecute would be a downright abuse of power, for they would, in that way, without any preliminary discussion, insisting upon none of the formalities with which the accusation that had been filed should comply before being received or rejected, confer upon that accusation a most extraordinary privilege, to wit, that of suspending the commission which the electors in the exercise of their sovereignty had awarded. Who does not see," added the orator, "that to give to this petition for leave to prosecute any present effect, whatever that effect may be, is to prejudge its value and the truth of its allegations, whereas the presumption of innocence to which every accused person is entitled of right, should be, with even greater reason, accorded to a man whose probity had never been doubted, and who had been honored by the free suffrages of his fellow-citizens."

The discussion was continued for some time upon that theme, the ministerial orators naturally taking the opposite view. Then a complication arose. The president, by virtue of age,—for the Chamber was not yet organized,—was a feeble old man, who did not always retain his presence of mind amid the difficult functions with which his certificate of birth had suddenly clothed him. The request for leave of absence, forwarded by Sallenauve, had reached him the night before, and if it had occurred to him to communicate it to the Chamber at the beginning of the session, as it was his duty to do, he would probably have strangled the discussion in the germ. But in parliamentary matters everything depends upon luck, good or bad as the case may be, and when the Chamber learned from the tenor of the letter, thus tardily brought to its knowledge, that Sallenauve was out of the country, and that he gave no other cause than *urgent business* in support of his request, the effect was deplorable.

"It is perfectly plain," said all the friends of the ministry, just as Rastignac had said, "he has gone to England, where all discomfited impostors go for refuge; he is afraid of prosecution, he feels that he is unmasked."

This view was held, entirely apart from any political feeling, by certain men of severe morals, who could not understand his failure to appear to defend himself against such a damning charge. In short, after a very earnest and very adroit argument by Procureur-Général Vinet, who had taken heart when he found that the accused was absent, the question of postponement, being put to vote, was carried in the affirmative, although by a very small majority; at the same time the absent deputy was granted a week's leave of absence.

On the day following that vote, Maxime wrote to Madame Beauvisage:

"MADAME,

"The enemy suffered a terrible reverse yesterday, and it is the opinion of my friend Rastignac, a very shrewd and experienced judge of parliamentary feeling, that Dorlange, whatever happens, will never recover from the blow that has been dealt him. If we do not succeed in procuring some positive proof in support of the charges made by our rustic friend, it is possible that the knave, assuming that he dares to show his head in France again, may, by sheer audacity, succeed in obtaining admission to the Chamber; but, after dragging out an obscure and miserable existence there for some time, he must inevitably be forced to resign; then there can be no doubt of Monsieur Beauvisage's election, for the electors, ashamed to have allowed themselves to be fooled by this schemer, will be only too happy to rehabilitate themselves by an honorable choice, to which, moreover, they were instinctively inclined at first. This result will be due to your rare sagacity, madame, for, had it not been for that species of second sight which led you to divine at once the treasures contained in the disclosure of that peasant-woman, we should have left that admirable instrument lying by the roadside. I must say to you, madame, even at the risk of flattering your pride, that neither Rastignac nor Procureur-Général Vinet, despite their lofty political intelligence, realized the value of your discovery; and even I myself, had it not been that by reason of my good fortune in knowing you, I was in a position to prejudge the merit of any idea emanating from you, should probably have shared the original lukewarmness of those two statesmen with reference to the excellent weapon which you offered to place in our hands. But, as the gift came from you, I at once realized all its importance, and, by pointing out to Rastignac a means of making use of it, I succeeded in transforming my friend the minister into an ardent member of our conspiracy, as well as a sincere admirer of the shrewdness and perspicacity displayed by you under the circumstances. So, madame, if it is ever my good fortune to be connected with you by the bond of which there has been mention between us, I shall not have to initiate you into political life, as you have succeeded so well in finding the way alone. We shall have no news here for a week, which is the time for which leave of absence has been granted him. If, when the week has expired, the defaulter does not make his appearance, I have no doubt that the election will be declared null and void, for yesterday's vote, which you will have seen in the newspapers, was practically a summons to him to repair to his post. You will understand that, between now and his return,—if he does return at all,—I shall not fail to see to it that the adverse disposition of the Chamber is properly fanned both by the press and by private conversations. Rastignac also has given instructions to the same effect, and it is probable that our adversary will find public opinion by no means prejudiced in his favor.

"Will you permit me, madame, to recall myself to Mademoiselle Cécile's memory, and I beg that you, as well as Monsieur Beauvisage, will accept the assurance of my most respectful homage."

The word had, in fact, been passed to the ministerial organs, which had begun to manufacture an atmosphere of discredit and ridicule around the name of Sallenauve, and by the most insulting insinuations his absence was given the color of a desertion in the face of the enemy. The result of these repeated attacks was the more inevitable because Sallenauve was very feebly defended by his political co-religionists; nor was there anything very surprising in their lukewarmness. Being at a loss to explain his conduct, the opposition newspapers, while feeling that they ought to uphold him, were afraid of involving themselves too far for the benefit of a man whose future became every day more problematical; might he not at any moment give the lie to the certificate of good morals with which they had taken it upon themselves to provide him?

On the day before that on which the leave of absence expired, Sallenauve being still absent, a small ministerial sheet published, under the caption of *A Lost Deputy*, a very witty and impertinent article, which made considerable noise. During the evening, Madame de l'Estorade called upon Madame de Camps, whom she found alone with her husband. She was intensely excited, and exclaimed, as she entered the room:

"Have you read that infamous article?"

"No," replied Madame Octave, "but Monsieur de Camps has told me about it, and it is really an outrage that ministers should order, or, at least, encourage, such villainous things."

"I am half mad," said Madame de l'Estorade, "for it all falls upon us."

"That is carrying conscientious scruples very far," said Madame de Camps.

"Why, no; I agree with madame," said the ironmaster; "all the poison there is in this business could be extracted by a word from l'Estorade, and by refusing to say it he makes himself an accessory to the scandal at all events, even if he does not become responsible as its author."

"So madame has told you?" said the countess, in a reproachful tone.

"Why, my dear love," replied Madame Octave, "although we have our little secrets, like all women, I could not avoid explaining to my husband the origin of the species of madness which has seized Monsieur de l'Estorade; that would have been to show a distrust of my other self which would have wounded him, and the explanations which I felt that I must give him do not, I think, place me in the position of an unfaithful depositary of a secret in which you have a personal interest."

"Ah! yours is a united household!" said Madame de l'Estorade, with a sigh. "Well, I am not sorry that Monsieur de Camps has been taken into our confidence; when it comes to finding a way out of the painful situation in which I am struggling, two heads are better than one."

"Why, what has happened?" inquired Madame de Camps.

"My husband is losing his head," the countess replied; "and I cannot find any trace of a moral sense in his behavior. Far from seeming to realize that he is, as Monsieur de Camps said just now, an accomplice in the base warfare that is being carried on at this moment, and that he has not, like those who stirred it up, the excuse of ignorance, he seems to take delight in it: just now he brought me the vile sheet with a triumphant air, and I found that he was quite prepared to be displeased because I did not agree with him that it was infinitely amusing and clever."

"That letter dealt him a terrible blow," said Madame Octave de Camps: "it literally wounded him in body and soul."

"I admit that," cried the iron-master; "but, deuce take it! a man's a man, and should take a madman's words for what they are worth."

"It is very singular, however," said Madame Octave, "that Sallenauve does not return; for that Jacques Bricheteau, to whom you gave his address, must have written to him."

"What would you have?" returned the countess; "there is a fatality in the whole affair; to-morrow the question whether Monsieur de Sallenauve's election shall be confirmed or not is to be discussed in the Chamber, and in case he has not returned, the ministry is very confident of obtaining a majority in favor of annulling it."

"Why, this is infamous," exclaimed Monsieur de Camps, "and, although my own position is by no means favorable to such a step, nothing shall prevent my going to the president of the Chamber and telling him the facts as they really are."

"I would have asked you to do it, even at the risk of arousing my husband's suspicions of my intervention, were it not for one consideration that holds us back: that we must not vex Monsieur de Sallenauve by making public the calamity that has befallen his friend."

"This is very clear," said Madame Octave: "to defend him in that way would be to run counter to his plans, especially as he may arrive in time, after all, and, furthermore, the decision of the Chamber is uncertain, whereas, if Monsieur Marie-Gaston's insanity were once noised abroad, he would never recover from the blow."

"By the way," said Madame de l'Estorade, "all the odium with which my husband has thus far covered himself in this horrible affair sinks into insignificance before a genuinely satanic conception that he confided to me just now, before dinner."

"What was that?" asked Madame de Camps, with interest.

"He says that I must go with him to-morrow to the gallery reserved for peers of France, and listen to the discussion that is to take place."

"His head has certainly gone wrong!" said

Monsieur de Camps; "that is exactly the case of Diafoirus the younger, offering to procure his betrothed the privilege of attending a dissection by way of amusement."

Madame de Camps made her husband a sign, as if to say: "Don't throw oil on the fire!" and asked the countess if she had not been able to make Monsieur de l'Estorade realize the *impropriety* of such a step.

"At the first objection I made on that ground," she replied, "he lost his temper and said that I was evidently very glad to perpetuate the public belief in an intimacy with *that man*, as I made haste to decline an unsought opportunity of publicly declaring our rupture."

"Well, my dear, you must go," said Madame Octave; "peace in the household before everything. Indeed, take it all in all, your presence at the debate may quite as well be taken as a proof of kindly interest."

"For fifteen years," observed the iron-master, "you have reigned supreme in your household, and now comes a revolution, which makes a sad change in the division of power!"

"Ah! monsieur, I beg you to believe that I never made such a use as this of my sovereignty, which, indeed, I always tried to hide."

"As if I did not know it!" rejoined Monsieur de Camps, taking Madame de l'Estorade's hands affectionately in his own. "Nevertheless, I agree with my wife, you must drink this cup."

"But I shall die of shame when I hear all the infamous things that the partisans of the ministry will say; it will seem to me as if they were murdering within two steps of me a man whom I might save by putting out my hand, and for whom I can do nothing."

"That is it exactly," said the iron-master, "and you might add that the man has rendered you a signal service; but do you prefer to install hell under your own roof and exasperate your husband's diseased mind?"

"Look you, my dear girl," said Madame Octave, "tell Monsieur de l'Estorade that I, too, would like to attend this sitting of the Chamber, that it will make less talk if you go there with a disinterested looker-on; and do not yield on that point; then I shall be there at all events to restrain your impulses and protect you from yourself."

"I should not have dared to ask it of you," replied Madame de l'Estorade, "for one does not invite people to witness a base action; but as you are kind enough to offer, I am so much the less miserable. Now, adieu! for I want my husband to find me at home when he returns: he dined with Monsieur de Rastignac this evening, where, I doubt not, they laid their plans cunningly for to-morrow."

"Very well, go; and in an hour I will write you a line as if I had not seen you, asking you if you have no way of enabling me to attend the sitting to-morrow, which, I understand, is likely to be interesting."

"To think of being reduced to all this petty conspiracy!" said Madame de l'Estorade, as she embraced her friend.

"My dear love," said Madame de Camps, "it has been said that a Christian's life is a constant skirmish, but the life of the married woman of a certain stamp is a genuine pitched battle. Have patience and courage."

With that the friends separated.

The next day, about two o'clock, Madame de l'Estorade, accompanied by her husband and Madame Octave de Camps, took her place in the gallery reserved for members of the peerage; she seemed ill, and replied with little warmth to the salutations that greeted her from different parts of the hall. Madame de Camps, who then entered the parliamentary precincts for the first time, noticed two things: she exclaimed at the careless dress of a large number of *honorable members*, and was impressed by the extraordinary amount of baldness that met her astonished eyes, from the gallery which overlooked the whole assemblage. Then she allowed Monsieur de l'Estorade to point out the notabilities of the Chamber; first, all the great men whom we will not pause to name because their names are in all the memoirs; then the poet Canalis, in whom she detected an Olympian air; D'Arthez, who pleased her by his modest bearing; Vinet, of whom she said that he looked like a viper with spectacles; and Victorin Hulot, one of the orators of the Left Centre. It was some time before she could accustom herself to the hum of private conversation, which might aptly be compared to the noise made by a swarm of bees buzzing around their hive; but the thing that perplexed her most was the general aspect of the assemblage, which was characterized by a strangely free and easy manner and an utter absence of dignity that would have made it impossible to suspect that it was made up of the chosen representatives of a great people.

It was written that Madame de l'Estorade should be spared no element of discomfort that day. As the session was about to open, the Marquise d'Espard, escorted by Monsieur de Ronquerolles, entered the gallery and took a seat beside her. Although they met constantly in society, the two women could not tolerate each other. Madame de l'Estorade despised the intriguing spirit, the absolute lack of principle, and the bitter, ill-humored disposition which the marchioness concealed beneath the most elegant exterior; and the marchioness held in even more profound contempt what she called the *fireside* virtues of Madame de l'Estorade. We must add that Madame de l'Estorade was thirty-two years old, and that time had spared her beauty, while Madame d'Espard was a woman of forty-four, whose beauty, despite the cunning devices of the toilet, was a thing of the past.

"Do you come here often?" she said to the countess, after the conventional phrases respecting their *joy* at meeting.

"Never," replied Madame de l'Estorade. "I am very regular," rejoined Madame d'Espard; adding, as if she had suddenly made a discovery: "Ah! but you have a special interest in this session: an acquaintance of yours is to be *tried*, I believe."

"Yes, Monsieur de Sallenauve has sometimes been a guest at my house."

"It is a great pity," said the marchioness, "to see a man who, as Monsieur de Ronquerolles tells me, really has talent, tending toward the police court in this way."

"His principal crime thus far," observed Madame de l'Estorade, stiffly, "seems to be his absence."

"It appears, however," continued Madame d'Espard, "that he is consumed by ambition. Before his parliamentary essay, he had made, as you doubtless know, a matrimonial essay in the Lanty family, which resulted in seclusion in a convent for the fair heiress, into whose good graces he slyly insinuated himself."

Madame de l'Estorade was not greatly astonished to find that that story, which Sallenauve had told her was known to very few, had reached Madame d'Espard's ears; the marchioness was one of the best-informed women in Paris; her salon, as an old academician said mythologically, was the *Palace of Renown*.

"The session is about to begin, I believe," said the countess, who, being in constant dread of some scratch from the marchioness's claws, was not sorry to break off the conversation.

The president had, in fact, rung his bell, the members were taking their places; the curtain was about to rise. In order to portray with due fidelity the scene which we propose that our readers shall witness, we know no surer and more convenient way than to borrow, word for word, the account given in a newspaper of the period.

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

MONSIEUR COINTET—vice-president—in the chair.

Sitting of May 28th.

At two o'clock Monsieur le Président takes the chair.

Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux—Keeper of the Seals—Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur, Monsieur le Ministre des Travaux Publics—Public Works—are on the ministerial benches.

The journal of the last sitting is accepted without discussion.

The order of the day is the verification of the credentials of the deputy chosen by the arrondissement of Arcis-sur-Aube.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT—The Chairman of the Committee has the floor.

MONSIEUR LE RAPPORTEUR—Chairman of the Committee.—Messieurs, the strange and deplorable position which Monsieur de Sallenauve has thought fit to assume toward you has not been changed, as we might well have hoped. The leave of absence expired yesterday, and Monsieur de Sallenauve continues to absent himself from your sittings, nor has any letter been received by Monsieur le Président, requesting further delay. This indifference in the exercise of functions which Monsieur de Sallenauve seems to have solicited with unusual ardor—Slight commotion on the Left.—would be, under any circumstances, a serious failure of duty; but when it is placed beside the accusation which is brought against him, does it not assume a character most injurious to his good name?—Murmurs on the Left. Applause in the Centre.—Compelled to seek a solution for a difficulty which may safely be said to be without a parallel in parliamentary annals, your committee is sharply divided between two entirely contrary opinions as to the measures to be adopted. The minority, which I alone represent, the committee being composed of but three members, has deemed it to be its duty to submit to you a proposition which I will call a radical one, the object of which is to solve the difficulty by submitting it to its natural judges. To annul Monsieur de Sallenauve's election *hic et nunc*, and to send him before the electors by whom he was chosen and whose unfaithful representative he is—such is one of the solutions which I have the honor to submit to you.—Excitement on the Left.—The majority, on the other hand, is of opinion that the verdict of the electors cannot be respected too absolutely, and that the errors of a man honored with their commission should not be taken notice of unless they go beyond the extremest limits of long-suffering and indulgence; consequently the committee instructs me to propose to you that Monsieur de Sallenauve be given further leave of absence for a fortnight,—Murmurs in the

Centre. Cries of *Good! good!* from the Left.—it being understood that, if Monsieur de Sallenauve has not appeared or given any sign of existence before the expiration of that period, he shall be deemed to have resigned his seat, without affording any occasion for irritating and fruitless discussions in the Chamber.—Expressions of approval and disapproval.

Monsieur le Colonel Franchessini, who had held an animated conversation with the Minister of Public Works during the remarks of the Chairman of the Committee, hastily addressed the chair.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—Monsieur de Canalis has the floor.

MONSIEUR DE CANALIS.—Messieurs, Monsieur de Sallenauve is one of those audacious creatures who, like myself, have persuaded themselves that politics is not a fruit forbidden to any man of intelligence, and that the stuff of which statesmen are made may be found in the poet and the artist as well as in the magistrate, the administrator, the lawyer, the doctor, and the landed proprietor. By virtue of our common origin, therefore, Monsieur de Sallenauve has my full sympathy, and no one will be surprised to see me ascend this tribune in support of the conclusions of your committee. But I am unable to assent to their final recommendation, and the idea of our colleague being declared, without discussion, to have resigned his seat, simply because his absence is prolonged beyond the leave accorded him, is repugnant at once to my conscience and my common sense. They tell you that Monsieur de Sallenauve's indifference to his functions is the less pardonable, because a serious charge has been made against him; but suppose, messieurs, that that charge were the cause of his absence?—Laughter in the Centre.—I beg your pardon, messieurs; I may not be so credulous as those gentlemen who laugh seem to believe. I am fortunate in this, that what is base does not come naturally to my mind, and Monsieur de Sallenauve, with the eminent position he held in the world of art, planning to effect an entrance to this place through the gateway of crime, is not a supposition which I can admit *a priori*. Those two disgusting spiders known as chicanery and intrigue have abundant opportunity to spin their webs about such births as his, and, far from admitting that he has fled from the charge that assails him, I ask myself whether, at this moment, he is not engaged in assembling the elements of his defence in another country?—Cries of *Good! That's it!* on the Left. Ironical laughter in the Centre.—Upon that assumption, which is in my opinion a very reasonable one, should we not, instead of calling him strictly to account for his absence, look upon it rather as conduct most respectful to the Chamber, whose labors he does not deem himself worthy to share until he shall be in a position to confound his accusers?

A VOICE.—Give him leave of absence for ten years, to go and seek his father, like Telemachus!—General laughter.

MONSIEUR DE CANALIS.—I did not expect to encounter so poetic an interrupter, but as an incident from the *Odyssey* has been brought forward, let us remember that Ulysses, disguised as a beggar, after he had been overwhelmed with insults, stretched his bow at last, and made short work of messieurs the suitors.—Loud murmurs in the Centre.—I vote for leave of absence for a fortnight, the Chamber to be consulted anew after the expiration thereof.

MONSIEUR LE COLONEL FRANCHESSINI.—I do not know whether the last speaker intended to intimidate the Chamber; but for my own part, such arguments have little effect upon me, and I am always ready to hurl them back whence they came.—Cries of *Nonsense! nonsense!* on the Left.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—Abstain from personalities, colonel!

MONSIEUR LE COLONEL FRANCHESSINI.—I agree, however, with the speaker who preceded me in this tribune to this extent: I do not believe that the delinquent has fled from the accusation brought against him. Neither that accusation, nor its probable effect upon your minds and elsewhere, nor the annulling of his election, are in his thoughts at this moment. Do you wish to know what Monsieur de Sallenauve is doing in England? read the English newspapers; for several days they have been filled with eulogies of a prima donna who has recently made her début at Her Majesty's Theatre—"—Loud murmurs and interruption.

A VOICE.—Such calumny is unworthy of the Chamber!

MONSIEUR LE COLONEL FRANCHESSINI.—Messieurs, being more accustomed to the freedom of camps than to the guarded speech of the tribune, I may have committed the offence of thinking too loud. The honorable gentleman who spoke last said to you: "I believe that Monsieur de Sallenauve has gone in search of evidence for his defence;" but I do not say: "I believe;" I say: "I know that a rich foreigner has succeeded in substituting his protection for that with which the Phidias, our colleague, honored a fair Italian.—Renewed interruption. Cries of *Order! order! This is intolerable!*

A VOICE.—Monsieur le Président, take the speaker from the floor.

Colonel Franchessini folds his arms and waits until the uproar is allayed.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—I request the speaker to keep to the question.

MONSIEUR LE COLONEL FRANCHESSINI.—I have not departed from the question; but as gentlemen refuse to listen to me, I declare that I agree with the opinion of the minority of the committee. It seems to me very proper to send Monsieur de Sallenauve back to his constituents to find out whether they intended to elect a deputy or a lover.—*Order! order!* Long-continued commotion. The uproar is at its height.

Monsieur de Canalis walks rapidly toward the tribune.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—Monsieur the Minister of Public Works claims the floor; as one of the king's ministers, he is entitled to be heard at any time.

MONSIEUR DE RASTIGNAC.—It was not my fault, messieurs, that the Chamber was not spared the scandalous scene it has just witnessed. I endeavored, in the name of the friendship of long standing between Colonel Franchessini and myself, to persuade him not to speak on a delicate question in which his inexperience of parliamentary affairs, aggravated, if I may so express it, by his readiness and sharp wit, was likely to lead him into some deplorable eccentricity. That, messieurs, was the meaning of the brief conversation that he and I held together on my bench, before he took the floor, and I myself have claimed it, after him, only to put aside any idea of complicity in the indiscretion of which, in my opinion, he has been guilty in descending to the confidential details which he has thought fit to discuss in the house. But since I have ascended the tribune, contrary to my purpose, and in a measure against my will, although no subject of special interest to the ministry is here involved, will the Chamber permit me to make a few brief observations?—*Go on! Go on!* from the Centre.

The Minister of Public Works endeavors to show that the conduct of the absent deputy is particularly noteworthy for its suggestion of contempt for the Chamber. He treats his colleagues slightingly and cavalierly. He requests leave of absence; but how does he request it? by letter from another country; that is to say, he begins by taking it and then solicits it. Does he even take the trouble, as the custom is, to give reasons for his request? Not at all; he announces that he is compelled to absent himself on account of *urgent business:* a most convenient allegation, by means of which the Assembly might some day find itself minus half its members. But, assuming that Monsieur de Sallenauve's business was really urgent, and of such a nature that he did not think that it could properly be explained in a letter to be made public, could he not have written confidentially to the president, or even have requested some one of his friends, in sufficiently good standing to be believed upon his simple affirmation, to vouch for the necessity of his absence without explicitly stating its causes?

At this point the minister's speech is interrupted by considerable commotion in the passageway at the right; several members leave their seats; others stand on their benches and crane their necks, apparently looking at something. The minister, having turned toward Monsieur le Président, as if to ask for an explanation, steps down from the tribune and returns to his place, where he is at once surrounded by a large number of deputies, among whom Monsieur le Procureur-Général Vinet is particularly prominent by reason of the vivacity of his pantomime. Groups form here and there in the semicircle; the sitting is practically suspended.

After a few moments, Monsieur le Président rings his bell.

THE USHERS.—Be seated, messieurs.

Members hasten to their seats from all directions.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—Monsieur de Sallenauve has the floor.

Monsieur de Sallenauve, who has been talking with Messieurs d'Arthez and Canalis ever since the sitting was suspended by his entrance, appears in the tribune. His attitude is modest, but betrays no embarrassment. Everybody is struck by his resemblance to the portraits of one of the most fiery of the revolutionary orators.

A VOICE.—It is Danton without the small-pox!

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.—Profound silence.—Messieurs, I am under no delusion as to my worth as a member of this Chamber, and I do not look upon this persecution as directed against myself personally; it seems rather to be directed against the opinions which I have the honor to represent. However that may be, my election seems to have been a matter of some importance to the ministry. A special agent and special newspaper men were sent to Arcis to oppose it, and a humble clerk at fifteen hundred francs a year was discharged without warning from his post, after twenty years of honorable service, for the crime of contributing to my success.—Loud murmurs in the Centre.—I can but thank the honorable gentlemen who interrupt me, for I must suppose that their noisy disapproval is called forth by that extraordinary action of the authorities, and not by any question as to the fact itself, which is not open to doubt.—Laughter on the Left.—As for myself, messieurs, whom they could not discharge, they attacked me with another weapon, and calumny enveloped in legal forms, combined with my timely absence—"

MONSIEUR DE RASTIGNAC.—I suppose that the ministry banished you to England?

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.—No, Monsieur le Ministre, neither to your influence nor to your suggestions do I attribute my absence, which, being forced upon me by an imperative sense of duty, was the result of no other inspiration than that; but as for the part you have taken in the charges made against me, I propose to state the facts, and the Chamber will form its own opinion.—Sensation.—The law, which, in order to protect the independence of the deputy, has ordained that no criminal prosecution may be instituted against a member of this body without the authorization of the Chamber first obtained, has been turned against me, I must say, with rare skill. The complaint of which I am the victim would not have been received at the office of the king's attorney, had it been presented there; for it is a naked accusation, entirely unaccompanied by any sort of proof, and I am not aware that the public prosecutor is in the habit of instituting proceedings on the unsupported allegation of the first comer. One must needs admire the rare cunning of the mind which realized that by applying to you they would reap all the benefit of a political accusation and would have to deal with none of the elements of a simple prosecution.—Sensation.—Now, to what adroit parliamentary tactician must we ascribe the honor of that conception? You know, messieurs, that the complainant is a woman, a peasant-woman, who describes herself as one who labors with her hands; whence we must conclude that the peasants of Champagne can boast of an intellectual superiority of which, hitherto, you have assuredly never dreamed.—Laughter.—It should be said, however, that, before setting out for Paris to file her complaint, my accuser seems to have had a conference with the mayor of Arcis, my ministerial rival in the late election, from whom she may have derived some light; and I may add that the magistrate in question evidently took great interest in the prosecution about to be instituted against me, for he felt called upon to pay the travelling expenses of the complainant and a village attorney who accompanies her to Paris.—*Aha!* on the Left.—When this superior person arrives in Paris, with whom does she communicate first of all? why, with the special agent sent by the government to Arcis to assure the triumph of the ministerial candidate. And who undertakes the preparation of the petition for leave to prosecute? not the special agent himself, but a lawyer inspired by him, and immediately after a breakfast to which the peasant and her rural adviser were invited to furnish the necessary information.—Sensation, long-continued.

MONSIEUR DE RASTIGNAC, from his seat.—Without discussing the truth of the facts stated, as to which I personally have no knowledge, I declare upon my honor that the government has had no connection whatever with the proceedings alleged to have taken place, and it disapproves and disavows them in the most explicit terms.

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.—After that formal declaration, which I have had the honor to call forth, I feel that it would ill become me, messieurs, to insist upon attributing to the government the responsibility for this intrigue; but my error will perhaps not seem unnatural to you when you remember that, as I entered this hall, the Minister of Public Works was in the tribune, taking part in a most unusual way in the discussion of a question relating exclusively to the internal discipline of the Chamber, and trying to persuade you that I had acted most disrespectfully toward you.

Monsieur de Rastignac utters some words which are inaudible to us.—Prolonged confusion.

MONSIEUR VICTORIN HULOT.—Monsieur le Président, I pray you, warn the minister not to interrupt. He will have an opportunity to reply.

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.—According to Monsieur le Comte de Rastignac, I showed an utter disregard of my duty to the Chamber by forwarding from another country a request for leave of absence, which I thus presumed to take before receiving the assent which I pretended to solicit. But, in his intense desire to put me in the wrong, Monsieur le Ministre has lost sight of the fact that when I left Paris the session had not opened, and that, if I had addressed my request to Monsieur le Président of the Chamber at that time, I should have addressed it to a pure abstraction.—Cries on the Left: *That is so!*—As for the insufficiency of the reasons given in support of my request, I regret to inform the Chamber that it was impossible for me to be more explicit, and that, by revealing the real cause of my absence, I should have betrayed a secret that was not my own; I did not, however, fail to understand that, by such reticence, which I am not at liberty to lay aside to-day, I exposed my conduct to the most unfavorable interpretations, and that I must even expect to see a combination of the burlesque and the shameful in the officious explanations which it would be attempted to substitute for mine.—Sensation.—As a matter of fact, I was so determined to neglect none of the duties of my position, that, in common with Monsieur le Ministre, I conceived a plan by which I fancied that I had made myself perfectly secure. One of the most honorable of men, who had knowledge of the secret cause of my absence, was requested by me to vouch to Monsieur le Président of the Chamber for the imperative necessity to which I sacrificed myself. But, calumny has done its work in that direction, I doubt not, and that honorable individual evidently considered it compromising to accord to a man over whom a criminal prosecution was impending, the sanction of his name and his word. Although to-day the danger seems to have passed away, I shall not betray the prudent *incognito* in which he has deemed it proper and advisable to envelop the commission with which I entrusted him. As I was very far from anticipating such selfishness, as I am justified in being surprised and painfully shocked by it, I shall be the more careful that that breach of friendship remains a secret between myself and his conscience, which alone will speak to him in my name.

At that moment there was great excitement in the gallery reserved for members of the peerage; its occupants crowded about a lady who was seized with a violent attack of hysteria. A large number of deputies hurried toward the gallery where the scene took place. Several, presumably physicians, rushed hastily from the hall. The sitting was momentarily suspended.

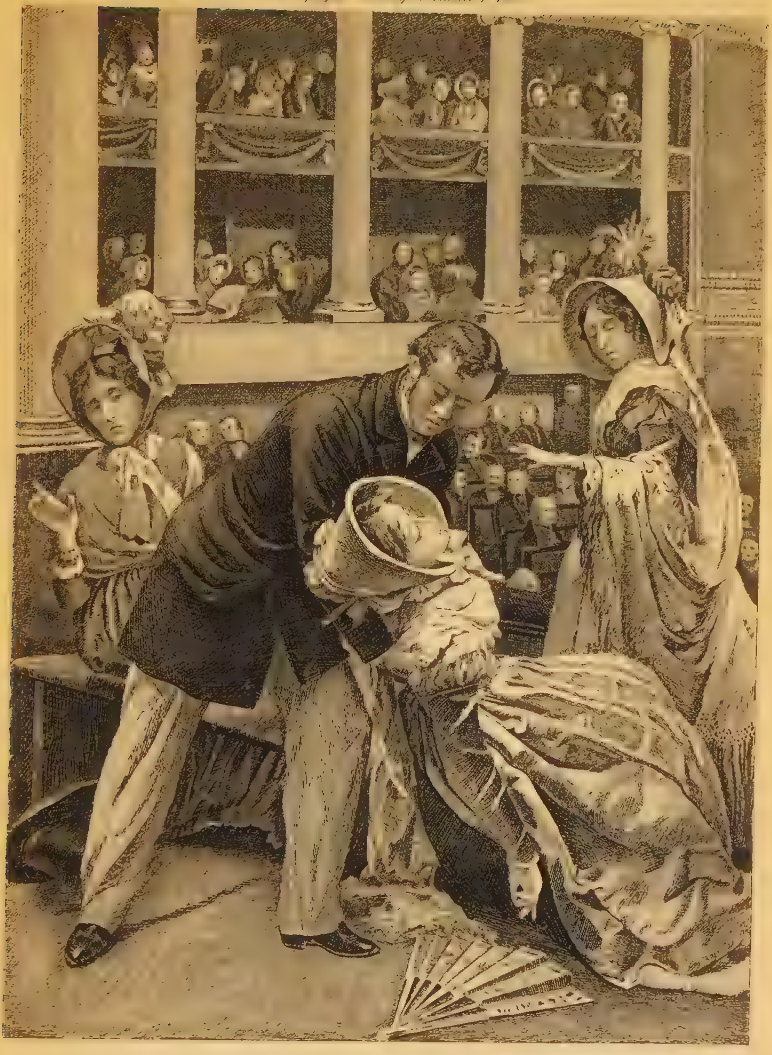
MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—Ushers, open the ventilators. This regrettable incident was due to lack of fresh air.—Monsieur de Sallenauve, continue your remarks.

MONSIEUR DE SALLENAUVE.—A single word, messieurs, and I am done. The petition for leave to prosecute which has been addressed to you has doubtless lost much of its importance in the eyes of my colleagues, even of those least kindly disposed. I have here a letter from the Champenois peasant, my kinswoman, withdrawing her complaint, and corroborating all the statements I have had the honor to make to you. I might read this letter, but I prefer to place it in the hands of Monsieur le Président.—*Good! good!*—With reference to my unauthorized absence, I returned to Paris this morning, and had I been present at the opening of the sitting, I might have appeared at my post within the strict limits of the leave of absence which the Chamber was kind enough to accord me; but, as Monsieur de Canalis has said to you, I was determined not to

IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

At that moment there was great excitement in the gallery reserved for the members of the peerage; its occupants crowded about a lady who was seized with a violent attack of hysteria. A large number of deputies hurried toward the gallery where the scene took place.

Copyright [illegible]



appear in this presence until the cloud that had risen around my reputation was entirely dissipated. My morning was employed in that work. Now, messieurs, it is for you to decide whether one of your colleagues should be sent back to his constituents because of a few hours' delay in taking his seat in this Chamber. After all, whether you decide to look upon me as a forger, a frantic lover, or simply a negligent deputy, I do not think that I need be alarmed about their verdict, and it seems extremely probable to me that I should return to you within a few weeks.

FROM ALL SIDES.—Vote! vote!

On descending from the tribune, Monsieur de Sallenauve receives numerous congratulations.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—The question is as to the validity of the election of Monsieur de Sallenauve by the arrondissement of Arcis.

The Chamber votes almost unanimously in the affirmative; only a few deputies of the Centre abstain from taking part in the vote.

Monsieur de Sallenauve is admitted and takes the oath.

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT.—The order of the day called for the reading of the draft of the address, but the chairman of the committee informs me that the draft cannot be submitted to the Chamber before to-morrow. There being nothing further in the order of the day, I declare the sitting at an end.

The Chamber adjourned at half-past four.*

---

* This Scene was not completed.—*Publishers' Note to the Edition Définitive.*

PUBLISHERS' NOTE TO THE DEPUTY FROM ARCIS

Of the three divisions of this story, as published in the *Edition Définitive*, upon which this edition is based, only the first—*The Election*—is by Balzac. This part appeared for the first time in *L'Union Monarchique*, in April and May, 1847. All that follows is by Charles Rabon, who completed the work and published it first in *Le Constitutionnel* in 1853, and afterward in volumes, in three parts, as follows: I. *Le Député d'Arcis*, 4 volumes, in 1854; II. *Le Comte Sallenauve*, 5 volumes, in 1855; III. *La Famille Beauvisage*, 4 volumes, in 1855, with the words *Terminé par Charles Rabon* on the title-page.

Much of the portion added by Rabon, including the whole of *La Famille Beauvisage*, is omitted in the Edition Définitive, as will appear by reference to the articles in Messrs. Cerfberr and Christophe's *Repertory*, relating to Dorlange-Sallenauve, Cécile Beauvisage, Philéas Beauvisage, Jacques Collin, Maxime de Trailles, and others of the characters who figure in these volumes.

LIST OF ETCHINGS

VOLUME XXXVII

PAGE
ON THE BANK OF THE AUBE . . . . *Fronts.*

THE RASTIGNAC SALON 80

THE BUST OF MME. DE L'ESTORADE 176

IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES 352

SONOMA
COUNTY
LIBRARY

to renew • para renovar

707.566.0281

sonomalibrary.org